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SERMONS,

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BY

LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.

BOSTON:
JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY.
CLEVELAND, OHIO:
JEWETT, PROCTOR & WORTHINGTON.
1852.

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BOSTON.

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SERMON I.

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD DESIRABLE.

"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." MATTHEW 6 : 10.

IN this passage we are instructed to pray that the world may be *governed*, and not abandoned to the miseries of unrestrained sin; that God himself would govern, and not another; and that God would administer the government of the world, in all respects, according to his own pleasure. The passage is a formal surrender to God of power and dominion over the earth, as entire as his dominion is in heaven. The petition, therefore, "Thy will be done," contains the doctrine —

THAT IT IS GREATLY TO BE DESIRED THAT GOD SHOULD GOVERN THE WORLD, AND DISPOSE OF MEN, IN ALL RESPECTS, ENTIRELY ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PLEASURE.

The truth of this doctrine is so manifest, that it would seem to rank itself in the number of self-evident propositions, incapable of proof clearer than its own light, had not experience taught that, of all truths, it is the most universally and bitterly controverted. Plain as it is, it has occasioned more argument than any other doctrine, and, by argument *merely*, has gained fewer proselytes; for, it is one of those controversies in which the *heart* decides wholly, and argument, strong or feeble, is alike ineffectual.

This consideration would present, in the threshold, a hope-

less impediment to further progress, did we not know, also, that arguments a thousand times repeated, and as often resisted, may at length become mighty, through God, to the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. I shall, therefore, suggest several considerations, to confirm this most obvious truth, that it is desirable that God should govern the world entirely according to his own good pleasure.

1. It is desirable that God should govern the world, and dispose of all events, according to his pleasure, because *he knows perfectly in what manner it is best that the world should be governed.*

The best way of disposing of men and their concerns is that which will most effectually illustrate the glory of God. The glory of God is his benevolence, and his natural attributes for the manifestation of it, and constitutes the sun of the moral universe, the light and life of his kingdom. All the blessedness of the intelligent creation arises, and ever will arise, from the manifestation and apprehension of the glory of God. It was to manifest this glory, that the worlds were created. It was that there might be creatures to behold and enjoy God, that his dominions were peopled with intelligent beings. And it is that his holy subjects may see and enjoy him, that he upholds and governs the universe. The entire importance of our world, therefore, and of men and their concerns, is relative, and is great or small only as we are made to illustrate the glory of God. How this important end shall be most effectually accomplished, none but himself is able to determine. He, only, knows *how* so to order things as that the existence of every being, and every event, shall answer the purpose of its creation, and, from the rolling of a world to the fall of a sparrow, shall conspire to increase the

exhibitions of the divine character, and expand the joy of the holy universe.

An inferior intelligence at the helm of government might conceive very desirable purposes of benevolence, and still be at a loss as to the means most fit and effectual to accomplish them. But, with God, there is no such deficiency. In him, the knowledge which discovered the end discovers also, with unerring wisdom, the most appropriate means to bring it to pass. He is wise in heart; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion. And is he not wise enough to be intrusted with the government of the world? Who, then, shall be his counsellor? Who shall supply the deficiencies of his skill? Oh the presumption of vain man! and oh the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

2. It is desirable that God should govern the world according to his own pleasure, *because he is entirely able to execute his purposes.*

A wise politician perceives, often, both the end and the means; and is still unable to bring to pass his counsels, because the means, though wise, are beyond his control. But God is as able to execute as he is to plan. Having chosen the end, and selected the means, his counsels stand. He is the Lord God omnipotent. The whole universe is a storehouse of means; and when he speaks, every intelligence and every atom flies to execute his pleasure. The omnipotence of God, in giving efficacy to his government, inspires and perpetuates the ecstasy of heaven. "And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our God. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." What will

that man do in heaven, who is afraid and reluctant to commit to God the government of the earth? And what will become of those who, unable to frustrate his counsels, murmur and rebel against his providence?

3. It is desirable that God should govern the world according to his pleasure, *because the pleasure of God is always good.*

The angels who kept not their first estate, and many wicked men, have great knowledge, and skill, and power: and yet, on these accounts, are only the more terrible; because they employ these mighty faculties to do evil. And the government of God, were he a being of malevolence, armed as he is with skill and power, would justly fill the universe with dismay. But, as it is, brethren, "let not your hearts be troubled." With God there is no perversion of attributes. He is as good as he is wise and powerful. God is love! Love is that glory of God which he has undertaken to express to his intelligent creation in his works. The sole object of the government of God, from beginning to end, is, to express his benevolence. His eternal decrees, of which so many are afraid, are nothing but the plan which God has devised to express his benevolence, and to make his kingdom as vast and as blessed as his own infinite goodness desires. It was to show his glory,—to express, in action, his benevolence,—that he created all the worlds that roll, and rejoice, and speak his name, through the regions of space. It is to accomplish the same blessed design, that he upholds, and places under law, every intelligent being, and directs every event, causing every movement, in every world, to fall in, in its appointed time and place, and to unite in promoting the grand result,—the glory of God, and the highest good of his kingdom. And is there a mortal, who, from this great system of blessed govern-

ment, would wish this earth to be an exception? What sort of beings must those be who are afraid of a government administered by infinite benevolence, to express, so far as it can be expressed, the infinite goodness of God? I repeat the question,—What kind of characters must those be, who feel as if they had good reason to fear a government the sole object of which is to express the immeasurable goodness of God?

4. It is greatly to be desired that God should govern the world according to his pleasure, *because it is his pleasure to rule as a moral governor.*

A moral government is a government exercised over free agents, accountable beings; a government of laws, administered by motives.

The importance of such a government below is manifest from the consideration, that it is in his moral government, chiefly, that the glory of God is displayed.

The superintendence of an empty world, or a world of mere animals, would not exhibit, at all, the moral character of God. The glory of God, shining in his law, could never be made manifest, and the brighter glory of God, as displayed in the Gospel, must remain forever hid; and all that happiness of which we are capable, as moral beings, the joys of religion below, and the boundless joys of heaven above, would be extinguished, in a moment, by the suspension of the divine moral government.

Will any pretend that the Almighty cannot maintain a moral government on earth, if he governs according to his own pleasure? Can he wield the elements, and control, at his pleasure, every work of his hands, but just the mind of man? Is the most noble work of God — that which is the most worthy of attention, and in reference to which all

beside is upheld and governed — itself wholly unmanageable? Has Omnipotence formed minds, which, the moment they are made, escape from his hands, and defy the control of their Maker? Has the Almighty erected a moral kingdom which he cannot govern, without destroying its moral nature? Can he only watch, and mend, and rectify, the lawless wanderings of mind? Has he filled the earth with untamed and untamable spirits, whose wickedness and rebellion he can merely mitigate, but cannot control? Does he superintend a world of madmen, full of darkness and disorder, cheered and blessed by no internal pervading government of his own? Are we bound to submit to all events, as parts of the holy providence of God; and yet, is there actually no hand of God controlling the movements of the moral world? But if the Almighty can, and if he does, govern the earth as a part of his moral kingdom, is there any method of government more safe and wise than that which pleases God? Can there be a better government? We may safely pray, then, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," without fearing at all the loss of moral agency; for all the glory of God, in his Law and Gospel, and all the eternal manifestations of glory to principalities and powers in heavenly places, depend wholly upon the *fact, that men, though living under the government of God, and controlled according to his pleasure, are still entirely free, and accountable for all the deeds done in the body.* There could be no justice in punishment, and no condescension, no wisdom, no mercy, in the glorious Gospel, did not the government of God, though administered according to his pleasure, include and insure the accountable agency of man.

Seeing, therefore, that all the glory of God, which he ever proposes to manifest to the intelligent creation, is to be made known by the church, and is to shine in the face of Jesus

Christ, and is to depend upon the perfect consistency of the moral government of God with human freedom, we have boundless assurance that, among his absolute, immutable, eternal purposes, one, and a leading one, is, so to govern the world according to his counsels, that, if men sin, there shall be complete desert of punishment, and boundless mercy in their redemption.

5. It is greatly to be desired that God should rule in the earth according to his pleasure, *because it is his pleasure to govern the world in mercy, by Jesus Christ.*

The government is in the hand of a Mediator, by whom God is reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them that believe. Mercy is the bestowment of pardon and favor upon the sinful and undeserving. Now, mankind are so eminently sinful, that no government, but one administered in infinite mercy, could afford the least consolation. Had any being but the God of mercy sat upon the throne, or any will but his will prevailed, there would have been no plan of redemption, and no purposes of election, to perplex and alarm the wicked. There would have been but one decree, and that would have been, destruction to the whole race of man. Are any reluctant to be entirely in the hands of God? Are they afraid to trust him to dispose of soul and body, for time and for eternity? Let them surrender their mercies, then, and go out naked from that government which feeds, protects, and comforts them. Let them give up their Bibles, and relinquish the means of grace, and the hopes of glory, and descend and make their bed in hell, where they have long since deserved to be, and where they long since would have been, if God had not governed the world according to his own good pleasure. If they would escape the evils which they fear from the hand of God,

let them abandon the blessings they receive from it, and they will soon discover whether the absolute dominion of God, and their dependence upon him, be, in reality, a ground of murmuring and alarm. Our only hope of heaven arises from being entirely in the hands of God. Our destruction could not be made more certain than it would be were we to be given up to our own disposal, or to the disposal of any being but God. Would sinful mortals change their own hearts? Could the combined universe, without God, change the depraved affections of men? Surely, then, we have cause for unceasing joy, that we are in the hands of God; seeing he is a God of mercy, and has decreed to rule in mercy, and actually is administering the government of the world in mercy, by Jesus Christ.

We have nothing to fear, from the entire dominion of God, which we should not have cause equally to fear, as outcasts from the divine government; but we have everything to hope, while he rules the earth according to his most merciful pleasure. The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

6. It is greatly to be desired that God should dispose of mankind according to his pleasure, *because, if he does so, it is certain that there will be no injustice done to any one.*

He will do no injustice to his holy kingdom by any whom he saves. He will bring none to heaven who are not holy, and prepared for heaven. He will bring none there in any way not consistent with his perfections, and the best good of his kingdom: none in any way but that prescribed in the Gospel, the way of faith in Jesus Christ, of repentance for

sin, and of good works as the constituted fruit and evidence of faith.

Earthly monarchs have their favorites, whom, if guilty of a violation of the laws, they will often interpose to save, although the welfare of the kingdom requires their punishment. But God has no such favorites, — he is no respecter of persons: he spared not the angels: and upon the earth distinctions of intellect, or wealth, or honor, will have no effect; he only that believeth shall be saved. The great and the learned shall not be obtruded upon heaven without holiness because they are great or learned; and the humble and contrite shall not be excluded because they are poor, or ignorant, or obscure. God has provided a way for all men to return to him. He has opened the door of their prison, and set open before them a door of admission into the kingdom of his dear Son; and commanded and entreated them to abandon their dreary abode, and come into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But all, with one consent, refuse to comply. Each prefers his own loathsome dwelling to the building of God, and chooses, steadfastly, the darkness of his own dungeon, to the light of God's kingdom. But, as God has determined that the redemption of his Son shall not be unavailing through human obstinacy, so he hath chosen, in Christ, multitudes which no man can number, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. And, in bringing these sons and daughters to glory, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, he will introduce not one whom all the inhabitants of heaven will not hail joyfully, as the companion of their glory. And if God does in the earth just as he pleases, he will make willing, and obedient, and bring to heaven, just those persons who it was most desirable should come. And he will bring just as many

obstinate rebels to abandon their prison, and enter cheerfully his kingdom, as infinite wisdom, goodness, and mercy, sees fit and desires. He will not mar his glory, or the happiness of his kingdom, by bringing in too many, nor by omitting to bring in enough. His redeemed kingdom, as to the number and the persons who compose it, and the happiness included in it, will be such as shall be wholly satisfactory to God, and to every subject of his kingdom.

And if God governs according to his pleasure, he will do no injustice to his impenitent enemies. He will send to misery no harmless animals without souls,—no mere machines,—none who have done, or even attempted to do, as well as they could. He will leave to walk in their own way none who do not deserve to be left; and punish none for walking in it who did not walk therein knowingly, deliberately, and with wilful obstinacy. He will give up to death none who did not choose death, and choose it with as entire freedom as himself chooses holiness; and who did not deserve eternal punishment as truly as himself deserves eternal praise. He will send to hell none who are not opposed to him, and to holiness, and to heaven; none who are not, by voluntary sin and rebellion, unfitted for heaven, and fitted for destruction, as eminently as saints are prepared for glory. He will consign to perdition no poor, feeble, inoffensive beings, sacrificing one innocent creature to increase the happiness of another. He will cause the punishment of the wicked to illustrate his glory, and thus indirectly to promote the happiness of heaven. But God will not illumine heaven with his glory, and fill it with praise, by sacrificing helpless, unoffending creatures to eternal torment; nor will he doom to hell one whom he will not convince, also, that he deserves to go thither. The justice of God, in the condemnation of the

impenitent, will be as unquestionable, as his infinite mercy will be in the salvation of the redeemed.

If the will of God is done on earth, among men, there will be no more injustice done to the inhabitants of the earth than there is done to the blessed in heaven. Was it ever known — did any ever complain — was it ever conceived — that God was a tyrant, in heaven? Why, then, should we question the justice of his government on earth? Is he not the same God below as above? Are not all his attributes equally employed? Does he not govern for the same end, and will not his government below conspire to promote the same joyful end as his government above?

7. It is greatly to be desired that God should govern the world according to his pleasure, *because his own infinite blessedness, as well as the happiness of his kingdom, depends upon his working all things according to the counsel of his own will.*

Could the Almighty be prevented from expressing the benevolence of his nature, according to his purposes, his present boundless blessedness would become the pain of ungratified desire. God is love, and his happiness consists in the exercise and expression of it, according to his own eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. It is therefore declared, "The Lord hath made all things for himself;" that is, to express and gratify his infinite benevolence. The moral excellence of God does not consist in quiescent love, but in love active, bursting forth, and abounding. Nor does the divine happiness arise from the contemplation of idle perfections, but from perfections which comprehend boundless capacity, and activity in doing good.

From what has been said, we may be led to contemplate with satisfaction the infinite blessedness of God.

God is love! This is a disposition which, beyond all others, is happy in its own nature. He is perfect in love; there is, therefore, in his happiness no alloy. His love is infinite; and, of course, his blessedness is unbounded. If the little holiness existing in good men, though balanced by remaining sin, occasions, at times, unutterable joy, how blessed must God be, who is perfectly and infinitely holy! It is to be remembered, also, that the benevolence of God is at all times perfectly gratified. The universe which God has created and upholds, including what he has done, and what he will yet do, will be brought into a condition which will satisfy his infinite benevolence. The great plan of government which God has chosen, and which his power and wisdom will execute, will embrace as much good as in the nature of things is possible. He is not, like erring man, straitened or perplexed, through lack of knowledge or power. There is in his plan no defect, and in its execution no failure. God, therefore, is infinitely happy in his holiness, and in the expression of it which it pleases him to make.

The revolt of angels, the fall of man, and the miseries of sin, do not, for a moment, interrupt the blessedness of God. They were not, to him, unexpected events, starting up suddenly, while the watchman of Israel slumbered. They were foreseen by God as clearly as any other events of his government, and have occasioned neither perplexity nor dismay. With infinite complacency he beholds still his unshaken counsels, and with almighty hand rolls on his undisturbed decrees. Surrounded by unnumbered millions, created by his hand, and upheld by his power, and made happy in the contemplation of his glory, he shines forth, God over all,

blessed forever. What an object of joyful contemplation, then, is the blessedness of God! It is infinite; his boundless capacity is full. It is eternal; he is God blessed forever. The happiness of the created universe is but a drop, — a drop to the mighty ocean of divine enjoyment. How delightful the thought, that in God there is such an immensity of joy, beyond the reach of vicissitude! When we look around us below, a melancholy sensation pervades the mind. What miserable creatures! What a wretched world! But when, from this scene of darkness and misery, we look up to the throne of God, and behold him, high above the darkness and the miseries of sin, dwelling in light inaccessible and full of glory, the prospect brightens. If a few rebels, who refuse to love him and participate in his munificence, are groping in darkness on his footstool, God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

2. How vast may we conceive to be the sum of created good which is comprehended in the kingdom of God.

It will satisfy infinite benevolence. If all the good might exist which angels and men could conceive, it would be nothing, compared with the enjoyment which God will actually communicate and uphold. The happiness which God will communicate will be worthy of himself. It will illustrate, so far as a created system can illustrate, the power and wisdom and goodness of God. How vast and blessed, then, must that kingdom be, which God erects as an expression of his glory, and in which he dwells and reigns, to prove, by experiment, his capacity to govern and to bless the universe!

This kingdom of God, so vast and so full of joy, is still destined to increase. God will never be idle. He will never have communicated, actually, infinite blessedness. His work will continue to grow under his hand, and his kingdom to

expand around him in capacity and joy. Oh, how great is God! How glorious will his works be! A fountain, ever flowing, and never exhausted, pouring out streams of blessedness to fill unnumbered fountains around him, each, to eternity, becoming more capacious, and yet the whole bearing no proportion to the uncreated source!

It seems to be the imagination of some that the kingdom of darkness will be as populous and as vast as the kingdom of light, and that happiness and misery, of equal dimensions, will expand, side by side, to all eternity. But, blessed be God, it is a mere imagination, totally unsupported by reason or revelation. Who ever heard of a prison that occupied one-half of the territories of a kingdom? and who can believe that the universe, which was called into being, and is upheld and governed, to express the goodness of God, will contain as much misery as happiness? How could the government of God be celebrated with such raptures in heaven, if it filled with dismay and ruin half the universe? How vast soever, therefore, the kingdom of darkness may be, in itself considered, it is certainly nothing but the *prison* of the universe, and small, compared to the realms of light and glory. The misery of that unholy community, whose exile from heaven is as voluntary as it is just, when the eye is fixed upon that only, fills the soul with trembling; but when, from this dreadful exhibition of sin, and display of justice, we raise the adoring eye to God, reigning throughout his boundless dominions, and rejoicing in their joy, the world of misery shrinks to a point, and the wailings of the miserable die away, and are lost in the song of praise.*

* I am aware that Calvinists are represented as believing and teaching the monstrous doctrine, that infants are damned, and that hell is doubtless paved with their bones. But, having passed the age of fifty, and been

3. From what has been said, we may perceive wherein consists the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The evil of sin does not consist in overt acts merely, nor in the misery which it actually occasions in time. The evil of sin is to be sought in its own nature, and is to be estimated by the effects it would produce if armed with power to express itself. Considered in this point of view, it is a deliberate, total and obstinate dissent from the government of God. As a temper of mind, it is enmity against God, and hostility to his law, and his entire government. God is the soul of his kingdom, and it is his purpose to make the happiness of every member of that kingdom to consist in love to him, and to his holy family. Sin rejects God as an object of affection, and sets up a separate, and opposite, and unworthy interest. The temper of sin and the temper of God are opposite. The plans of God and the plans of sin are opposite. If the purposes of sin go into operation, the purposes of God are defeated. If sin succeeds, the kingdom of God fails. And, that sin does not succeed, is owing to nothing but want of power and skill. If its malignant nature, as it exists in men and devils, could be fully expressed in action, it would

conversant, for thirty years, with the most approved Calvinistic writers, and with distinguished Calvinistic divines in New England, and in the Middle and Southern and Western States, I must say that I have never seen or heard of any book which contained such a sentiment, nor a man, minister or layman, who believed or taught it. And I feel authorized to say, that Calvinists, as a body, are as far from teaching the doctrine of infant damnation, as any of those who falsely accuse them. And I would earnestly and affectionately recommend to all persons who have been accustomed to propagate this slander, that they commit to memory, without delay, the ninth commandment, which is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." — *Note to the Seventh Edition, printed in* 1827.

dethrone the God of heaven, abolish his law, overturn his government, extinguish the joy of God and of the universe, and fill the mighty void with everlasting woe. It is a wandering star, which will not obey the impulse of the sun, and which, if able, would blot out the sun, and leave to blackness of darkness every other luminary, that it might roll above the mighty ruin, eclipsed by no superior lustre.

Such is the selfish, malignant enmity to God, which reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Such, by nature, is that carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. Nothing but its own imbecility prevents it from being an evil as great in fact as it is in nature and tendency. Let benevolence abandon the throne of the universe, and let sin ascend and take possession of the treasures of knowledge and power, and reign to express its own nature in action, as God reigns to express his love, and it would soon dismay the universe with demonstrations of its evil nature.

4. What has been said concerning the character and government of God may enable us to perceive wherein consists the glory of the Gospel.

The Gospel is not, as some have imagined, an expedient to set aside a holy, just and good law, in order to substitute an inferior one, brought down more nearly to the depraved inclinations of men. God did not send his Son to betray his government, and compromise with rebels, by repealing the law which offended them. He sent his Son to vindicate and to establish this law, to redeem mankind from the curse, and to bring them back to the obedience of the same law from which they had revolted.

It is the glory of the Gospel that it upholds the moral law and moral government of God, and brings back and recon-

ciles to his holy dominion millions and millions of apostate creatures.

5. Those who are opposed to the decrees of God, and to his sovereignty, as displayed in the salvation of sinners, are enemies to God.*

They are unwilling that his will should be done in earth as it is in heaven; for the decrees of God are nothing but his choice as to the manner in which he will govern his own kingdom. He did not enter upon his government to learn wisdom by experience. Before they were yet formed, his vast dominion lay open to his view; and before he took the reins of created empire, he saw in what manner it became him to govern. His ways are everlasting. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. To be opposed to the decrees of God, therefore, is to be unwilling that God should have any choice concerning the government of the world. And can those be willing that God should govern the world entirely according to his pleasure, who object to his having any pleasure upon the subject? To object to the choice of God, with respect to the management of the world, because it is eternal, is to object to the existence of God. A God of eternal knowledge, without an eternal will or choice, would be a God without moral character.

To suppose that God did not know what events would exist in his kingdom, is to divest him of omniscience. To suppose that he did know, and did not care, — had no choice, no purpose, — is to blot out his benevolence, to nullify his wisdom,

* I do not say that all who *speak* against the universal government of God, and his holy sovereignty in the salvation of men, are, in the heart, opposed to these precious doctrines. God is their judge, and knows perfectly when bitterness and sneer is the result of real enmity, and when, also, of ignorance, or prejudice, or simple misapprehension.

and convert his power into infinite indolence. To suppose that he did know, and choose, and decree, and that events do not accord with his purposes, is to suppose that God has made a world which he cannot govern; has undertaken a work too vast; has begun to build, but is not able to finish. But to suppose that God did, from the beginning, behold all things open and naked before him, and that he did choose, with unerring wisdom and infinite goodness, how to govern his empire, — and yet, at the same time, to employ heart, and head, and tongue, in continual opposition to this great and blessed truth, — is, most clearly, to cherish enmity to God and his government.

To object to the choice of God because it is immutable, is to cavil against that which constitutes its consummating excellence. Caprice is a most alarming feature in a bad government; but in a government absolutely perfect, none, surely, can object to its immutability, but those who, if able, would alter it for the worse.

To say that, if God always knew how to govern so as to display his glory, and bless his kingdom, and always chooses thus to govern, there can be, therefore, no accountable agency in the conduct of his creatures, is to deny the possibility of a moral government, to contradict the express testimony of God; and this, too, at the expense of common sense, and the actual experience of every subject of his moral government on earth.

6. From the character of God, and the nature of his government, as explained in this discourse, may be inferred, the nature and necessity of unconditional submission to God.

Unconditional submission is an entire surrender of the soul to God, to be disposed of according to his pleasure, — occasioned by confidence in his character as God.

There are many who would trust the Almighty to regulate the rolling of worlds, and to rule in the armies of heaven, just as he pleases; and devils they would consign to his disposal, without the least hesitation; and their own nation, if they were sure that God would dispose of it according to their pleasure; even their own temporal concerns they would risk in the hands of God, could they know that all things would work together for their good; their souls, also, they would cheerfully trust to his disposal, for the world to come, if God would stipulate, at all events, to make them happy.

And to what does all this amount? Truly, that they care much about their own happiness, and their own will, but nothing at all about the will of God, and the welfare of his kingdom. He may decree, and execute his decrees, in heaven, and may turn its inhabitants into machines, or uphold their freedom, as he pleases; and apostate spirits are relinquished to their doom, whether just or unjust. It is only when the government of God descends to particulars, and draws near and enters their own selfish enclosures, and claims a right to dispose of them, and extends its influence to the unseen world, that selfishness and fear take the alarm. Has God determined how to dispose of my soul? Ah! that alters the case. If he can, consistently with freedom, govern angels, and devils, and nations, how can he govern individuals? How can he dispose of me according to his eternal purpose, and I be free? Here reason, all-penetrating, and all-comprehensive, becomes weak; the clouds begin to collect, and the understanding, veiled by the darkness of the heart, can "find no end, in wandering mazes lost."

But if God has purposes of mercy in reserve for the sinner, he is convinced, at length, of his sin; and finds himself in an evil case. He reforms, prays, weeps, resolves, and re-resolves,

regardless of the righteousness of Christ, and intent only to establish a righteousness of his own. But, through all his windings, sin cleaves to him, and the law, with its fearful curse, pursues him. Whither shall he flee? What shall he do? A rebel heart, that will not bow, fills him with despair. An angry God, who will not clear the guilty, fills him with terror. His strength is gone, his resources fail, his mouth is stopped. With restless anxiety, or wild amazement, he surveys the gloomy prospect. At length, amidst the wanderings of despair, the character of God meets his eye. It is new, it is amiable, and full of glory. Forgetful of danger, he turns aside to behold this great sight; and while he gazes, new affections awake in his soul, inspiring new confidence in God, and in his holy government. Now God appears qualified to govern, and now he is willing that he should govern, and willing himself to be in the hands of God, to be disposed of according to his pleasure. What is the occasion of this change? Has the divine character changed? There is no variableness with God. Did he, then, misapprehend the divine character? Was all this glory visible before? Or has a revelation of new truth been granted? There has been no new revelation. The character now admired is the same which just before appeared so gloomy and terrible. What, then, has produced this alteration? Has a vision of angels appeared, to announce that God is reconciled? Has some sudden light burst upon him, in token of forgiveness? Has Christ been seen upon the cross, beckoning the sinner to come to him? Has heaven been thrown open to his admiring eyes? Have enrapturing sounds of music stolen upon the ear, to entrance the soul? Has some text of Scripture been sent to whisper that his sins are forgiven, though no repentance, nor faith, nor love, has dawned in his soul? And does he now submit, because God

has given him assurance of personal safety? None of these. Considerations of personal safety are, at the time, out of the question. It is the uncreated, essential excellence of God, shining in upon the heart, which chains the attention, fixes the adoring eye, and fills the soul with love, and peace, and joy; and the act of submission is past, before the subject begins to reflect upon his altered views, with dawning hope of personal redemption.*

The change produced, then, is the effect of benevolence, raising the affections of the soul from the world, and resting them upon God. Holiness is now most ardently loved. This is seen to dwell in God and his kingdom, and to be upheld and perfected by his moral government. It is the treasure of the soul, and all the attributes of God stand pledged to protect it. The solicitude, therefore, is not merely, What will become of me? but, What, O Lord, will become of thy glory, and the glory of thy kingdom? And, in the character of God, these inquiries are satisfactorily answered. If God be glorified, and his kingdom upheld and made happy, the soul is satisfied. There is nothing else to be anxious about; for individual happiness is included in the general good, as the drop is included in the ocean.

It is by surrounding himself with benevolent intelligences, who find all their joy in love to himself and his kingdom, and

* I pretend not to exhibit, in the above outline of experience, all the varieties of exercise through which the convinced pass; nor to intimate that every person is attentive always to interpret the language of his heart, or able, in every instance, to specify the exact time when he ceased to contend, and gave up the power and dominion unto God. The act of submission is, doubtless, instantaneous, and in nature such as has been described, though the evidence of the change, to the subject of it, may be gradual.

by manifesting himself to them, that God upholds the happiness of heaven. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself," is the sweet attracting power that draws the holy universe to God, and unites to each other every member of his great family. But men have rejected God and his kingdom, as objects of supreme love, and contracted and lowered their affections, to rest solely on selfish and worldly objects; so that, in every sinner, we behold God and his kingdom set at naught, and self set up, and loved, and sought, instead of God, and the universal good.

Hence, the wicked find no consolation, and can see no security, in the character of God, or in the rectitude of his government, because these secure the happiness of those only who are in the kingdom of God. The multiplication of assurances, therefore, that God will do right, will glorify himself, will bless his holy family, affords no consolation, inspires no confidence, because it insures that which they care nothing about, and leaves awfully exposed the only thing which they do care about.

The character of God insures security and happiness to the repenting sinner *in* his kingdom, but it affords no security, no happiness, to the impenitent sinner *out* of his kingdom; and this is the reason why the wicked are so much afraid of God. It is not because they really think that God will act unworthily of himself; they do not suspect the rectitude of his government. They do not question whether God will glorify himself, and surround himself with a joyful, holy kingdom. The sole difficulty is, that the character of God affords no guarantee of safety and happiness to those who are out of his kingdom, and in hostile array against it. Now, the only remedy which God proposes, and which can be proposed, is,

for the sinner to give up himself, as the object of supreme love, and transfer his perverted affections to God, their proper object. This the sinner refuses to do. He persists in separating himself from God, and still demands that God should give him some pledge of safety, not in his kingdom, but while he continues in opposition to it, and lives in voluntary exile. With such desires, God never complies. All his creatures who will place their affections on him, and seek happiness in the way which he provides, shall be happy. They shall find in God all that immortal minds can desire. But God will not extend his favors beyond the limits of his holy kingdom. If the wicked, who have departed from God, will not, by Jesus Christ, return to him, they must die. Benevolence is the only disposition capable of happiness, and selfishness is inherent misery.

But raise your immortal desires, and fix them upon God, and let your contracted souls expand with benevolent affections to his holy kingdom, and you have, in the character of God, infinite security. Is your joy inspired by the perfections of God? They are immutable and eternal. Does your happiness arise from the manifestation of his glory? Behold, he is rearing a kingdom, in which his glory is to shine as the sun forever. All things are working together for *your* good, because they are all contributing to brighten that glory of God, in which your good consists. Do you rejoice in the happiness of his kingdom? It is everlasting. Do you confide in the government of God, because in his perfections you behold a perfect security of its joyful results? Your confidence is well placed. The counsel of God shall stand. His kingdom shall rise majestic around him, and shout and rejoice in the blaze of his glory forever.

7. The sinner who dies in his sins is the voluntary cause of his own destruction.

The decrees of God do not compel him to sin; and Election, when he has sinned, does not shut him out of heaven. He is voluntary in his departure from God, he is voluntary in loving the creature more than God, and he is voluntary in refusing to return to God by Jesus Christ. A complete atonement has been made for all his sins; and a free pardon is offered, if he will repent. But he will not repent. Christ is able and willing to save him, if he will come to him; but he will not come. Aversion to God and his government caused his departure, and the same aversion prevents his return by Jesus Christ. God has built an eternal prison, and the sinner fits himself for it, and goes there of his own accord, in spite of all the restraints which God has laid upon him, and all the obstructions by which he has blocked up the way to ruin. God has done everything, but just to exert almighty power; yet he will not turn. He will die!! He shuts his eyes; he stops his ears; and casts behind him Bibles, and Sabbaths, and prayers, and exhortations, and entreaties; he treads under foot the blood of the covenant, and does despite to the Spirit of grace; and, through a host of opposing means, and while God, and angels, and men, are entreating him to stop, he forces his way down to ruin.

As the conclusion of this discourse, I would, therefore, expostulate with those of you who, to this time, have persisted in your alienation from God. As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, and as though God by me did entreat, I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. What defect is there in his character, that you should not love him? What odious attribute, to justify aversion? What iniquity in his law, to occasion revolt? What tyranny in his government,

to justify insurrection? Why have you rebelled? And, seeing you may return, why do you refuse to return? What cause have you to distrust and oppose the government of God? Why are you displeased that he should display his power, and wisdom, and goodness, and justice, and mercy, in a plan of government known and approved from eternity? What difference does it make to you whether God chose from eternity how to govern, or chooses from day to day? Would infinite wisdom and goodness choose, at one time, what they would reject at another? Would not the daily counsels of God correspond exactly with his eternal purpose? What right have you to dictate to the Almighty, or to say to him, What doest thou? You know that he will glorify himself and bless his holy kingdom, and will render to you, even should he destroy you, perfect justice according to your deeds. Why, then, are you so restless in his hands? Why so jealous and fearful, that if a door of escape were opened, you would abandon forever his holy dominion? Did you ever hear that the Almighty erred in judgment? Do the angels of heaven alarm you with complainings? Can you adduce an instance in which God has done you injustice? Whence, then, this opposition? But you say, (I know what is in your heart,) —"I am afraid God has determined to send *me* to hell." And if he has, do you not think you will deserve to be sent thither? If he has, do you expect to avert the calamity by contending with your Maker? Would you turn back the arm of his power? Would you wrest the sceptre from his hand? Would you tarnish the glory of his name, and extinguish the joy of his kingdom, to rescue yourself from deserved punishment?

"But, is it my duty to be willing to be damned?" It is your duty to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to confide in his govern-

ment, and to be willing that he should dispose of you, forever, just as he pleases. Do you think such submission synonymous with willingness to be damned? It is as different as heaven is from hell. It is the temper of heaven, and your present rebellious temper is the temper of those who are lost.—"But is it my duty to be willing to be a sinner, and go to hell, and be sinful and miserable to all eternity?" No; it is your willingness to be a sinner which is now preparing you for hell, and leading you, step by step, to destruction. And should you ever enter the abodes of darkness, it will be your voluntary wickedness which will perpetuate your misery. God does not compel nor command any of his creatures to sin, or to be willing to sin, either in this world or the world to come. He forbids your choice of sin. He commands you to repent, and by Jesus Christ to return and live. He commands you to choose, not hell, but heaven; swearing by himself that he hath no pleasure in your death, and entreating, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?" But if, in the face of prohibitions, and threatenings, and entreaties, you will choose death, and treasure up wrath until you are fitted for destruction, you will then, if sent to hell, have no cause to complain of your allotment, nor any right to dissent from your sentence of condemnation; and your conscience, whatever your heart may say, never will dissent.

This day, then, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Repent, immediately; return and worship, and bow down and kneel before the Lord your Maker. It is not tears, and feigned prayers, and heartless resolutions, that can appease your God. You are alienated from God, and you must be reconciled. It is hopeless to contend with God; you cannot conquer, you cannot escape, you cannot endure his displeasure, and yet you must submit or fall under it forever.

You are opposing that kingdom by which the glory of God is to be illustrated, and his creation blessed. If God were indifferent to his glory, or indifferent to the good of his kingdom, you might hope to profit from his neutrality. But God is not indifferent. His whole immense mind is awake to the subject, and glows with intense desire and unwavering determination to effect his purpose; and all the resources of his power, and wisdom, and knowledge, stand prepared to overturn his enemies. The government of God is, indeed, terrible to you, not because it is unjust, but because it is just, and you oppose it. It is rolled on by the hand of omnipotence, with all the ardor of infinite benevolence, and you have arisen up to stop its progress; and there is no alternative but to submit, and unite, and go on with God, or be crushed by his power, and consumed by the fierceness of his wrath. With such hearts of alienation, are you prepared to meet your God? Is death hasting to overtake you? Is the grave opening to receive you, and will it close forever upon your glory? Is the trump of God preparing to sound, and will it call you forth to the resurrection of damnation? Is there pardon, and will you not accept it? Are there boundless realms of light, and will you live in eternal exile? Is there a glorious God, and will you never love him? Is there but one prison in the universe, and will you make that your everlasting abode? Go, listen to the song of praise. Go forth, and look upon the miseries of the lost; hear their wailings, and behold the smoke of their torment. Is this the society which you choose instead of heaven, and these the employments in which you would spend the ages of eternity? Is there one of you who has laid aside the hope of heaven? one, who has resolved to wage eternal war with God? Why, then, do you continue the work of ruin? Have you not sins enough to answer for?

Have not your souls stood long enough in jeopardy? Every moment, you are multiplying provocations against Heaven. Every moment, you are despising the riches of the goodness of God. Every moment, Justice pleads, with louder importunity, "Cut them down;" and Mercy, with feebler voice, "Spare them a little longer."

The voice of Mercy will soon be heard no more. The patience of God will not wait forever. His Spirit will not always strive. A hand's breadth only is between you and the grave. If you have any work to do, it must be done quickly, for death is at the door. This day perverted, may be the last you will ever see. This moment, your sun may be casting its last beams upon the mountains. Or, should you live, this day may close the period of divine influence. This discourse neglected, may be the last by which God will ever expostulate with you in mercy.

By all the joys, then, of immortality, and by all the sorrows of eternal death,—by all the mercies of God, and by all the terrors of his wrath,—I beseech you, be ye reconciled to God. Submit to him, and he will rule for his own glory; and you shall behold that glory, and rejoice in it forever. But rebel, and still he will reign, still he will bless his kingdom, but he will exclude you forever from its holy joys.

SERMON II.

THE REMEDY FOR DUELLING.

"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." ISAIAH 59: 14, 15.

THE people of Israel, when this passage was written, had become exceedingly corrupt, and were sinking under the pressure of fearful judgments.

But although they are hardened in sin, they are not insensible to misery; and though regardless of God as their benefactor, they murmur and tremble before him as the author of their calamities.

They admit, indeed, their sinfulness, but suppose that they have made already a sufficient atonement for it. It is not for sending judgments, therefore, that they impeach the Almighty, but for continuing them; not because he is just, but because he has no mercy. "Wherefore have we fasted (say they), and thou seest not,— have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?"

The Majesty of Heaven condescends to reply. He declares their sin to be the cause of his judgments, and their hypocrisy and impenitence the ground of their continuance.

The sins which brought down the judgments of Heaven were, it appears, national sins. As individuals, they were guilty, and each had contributed to augment the national

stock; but, of all classes, their rulers, and men of wealth and eminence, had been the most liberal contributors. Their private character was abominable, and their public character was no better. They perverted justice, their feet ran to evil, their hands were defiled with blood. Their thoughts were thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction were in their paths.

The profligate example of rulers has at all times a pernicious influence. It had in the present case. Conspicuous by its elevation, and surrounded by the fascinations of honor, it ensnared the young, emboldened the timid, and called hardened villains from their dark retreats. A tremendous scene ensued; a scene of impurity, intrigue, jealousy, violence and murder. And there was none to help. All bonds were sundered; the foundations were destroyed. "None called for justice." The oppressed did not, because they despaired of her aid; and the wicked did not, because they were too guilty to trust to her decisions.

Doubtless, in the humble walks of life, there were some who had escaped this contagion of bad example, and who, had they been united and courageous, might have set bounds to these evils; but they neglected to make exertion,—they were dismayed, and gave up the cause of God without an effort.

I have no conception that this state of the Jewish nation is, in general, a correct portrait of our own. But are there no points of resemblance? I allude now only to the conduct of such of our rulers and men of eminence as denominate themselves men of honor; and who, despising the laws of their country and their God, adjust with weapons of death their private quarrels. To such, the character ascribed to the

Jewish rulers is affectingly applicable. Their hands are full of blood; and wasting and destruction are in their paths.

I allude also to the impunity with which, in a community nominally Christian, and under the eye of the law, these deeds of violence are committed. With respect to the punishment of even *murder*, committed in a duel, "judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter."

It may be added, that, as among the Jews, the *people*, who by the influence of public sentiment might have limited the evils of their day, remained inactive; so the great body of this nation, although they abhor the crime of duelling, remain inactive spectators of the wide-wasting evil.

"But," it will be demanded, "how can the people prevent duelling? Already laws are enacted, with severe penalties. Besides this, what can we do?" You can rescue these laws from contempt, by securing their prompt execution. Do you demand how? By withholding your suffrage from every man whose hands are stained with blood, or who has been directly or indirectly concerned in a duel; and by intrusting to men of fair moral character, and moral principle, the making and execution of your laws.

It will, therefore, be the object of this discourse, to suggest and illustrate the reasons which should induce every man to withhold his vote from any person who has fought, or aided in fighting, a duel.

1. The elevation of duellists to power is a practice in direct opposition to the precepts of the Christian religion.

Civil government is a divine ordinance. The particular form is left to the discretion of men; but the character of rulers God has himself prescribed. They must be *just men:* such as *fear God; a terror to evil doers, and a praise to*

them that do well. Do duellists answer to this description? Are they just men? Do they fear God? Look at their law of honor. It constitutes the party judge in his own cause, and executer of his own sentence. Its precepts, like those of Draco, are written in blood. Death, or exposure to it, is its lightest penalty; and this, with unrelenting severity, is inflicted for the most trifling offence, as well as for the most enormous crime; and as often, perhaps, upon the innocent, as upon the guilty.

When arrested by the fatal challenge, no plea of reverence for God, of respect for human law, of conscience, of innocency, absence of anger, actual friendship, affection to parents, wife, or children, the hope of heaven or fear of hell, is for one moment admitted. All obligations are cancelled; all ties are burst asunder; all consequences are disregarded. "Nor justice nor mercy may interpose, to mitigate the rigors of the controversy. The peaceable must fight the quarrelsome; the rich man, the bankrupt; the father of a family, the libertine; the son of many hopes, the worthless prodigal." It is a law which inculcates no virtue, and which prohibits no crime, if it be *honorably committed.* It tolerates adultery, blasphemy, intemperance, revenge, and murder. "Thou shalt kill" is its first and great command, and too much conscience to obey it is the only unpardonable sin. The obedient subjects of a law so impious, so unmerciful and unjust, God has denounced as unfit to govern men. They are disfranchised by Heaven. But,

2. The duellist is a murderer; and, were there no sentence of exclusion from civil power contained in the Word of God, the abhorrence of murder should exclude from confidence these men of blood.

"Murder," says Blackstone, "is committed, when a person

of sound memory and discretion killeth any reasonable creature in being, with malice aforethought, either express or implied. Express malice is, when one, with a sedate, deliberate mind, and formed design, doth kill another. This takes in the case of deliberate duelling, where both parties meet avowedly with an intent to murder." And a greater than Blackstone has said: "If *a man* smite *his neighbor* with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer. And if he smite him with a hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, *and he die*, he is a murderer. And if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by lying of wait, that he die, or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die, he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer." The laws of the several States have also spoken on this subject, and, in perfect accordance with reason and the Word of God, declare the taking of life in a duel to be murder. The appointed punishment of murder is death. God, who defines the crime, has himself specified the penalty. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. The murderer shall surely be put to death. The avenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer. Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. He shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him."

These denunciations of the Word of God are peremptory, and are to this moment in full force. The law violated by the murderer is a moral law. The cancelling of Jewish ceremonies has not affected it. The penalty is the penalty of a moral law, and the obligation to inflict it is universal and immutable. Shall we, then, dare to rise up, in the face of Heaven, and turn judgment away backward? Shall we snatch from the dungeon and the gallows the victims of justice, to

invest them with power, and adorn them with dignity and honor?

But every duellist, it will perhaps be said, is not a murderer, inasmuch as death is not always the consequence of fighting. The death of the victim is, I know, necessary to justify the infliction of the penalty in its full extent. But is a crime never committed until it becomes so palpable that the law can take hold of it? I do not hesitate to say that every duellist is a murderer; for he has said so himself. He has avowed as his own principles of murder; he tells you that, if occasion calls, and his skill be sufficient, he will murder. And when, insulted or challenged, he has stood forth in the field of combat, and aimed the deadly weapon, and through want of skill only, or through fear and trembling, has failed to prostrate his victim is he therefore not a murderer? Is the professed robber, who fails in his attempt, therefore not a robber? Is the assassin, because his thrust was not deadly, therefore not an assassin?

3. A regard to the public safety, as well as respect to the authority of God, and an abhorrence of murder, should withhold the suffrage of the community from the duellist.

When we intrust life and liberty and property to the hands of men, we desire some pledge of their fidelity. But what pledge can the duellist give? His religious principle is nothing; his moral principle is nothing. His honor is our only security. But is this sufficient? Are the temptations of power so feeble, are the public and private interest so inseparable, are the opportunities of fraud so few, that, amid the projects of ambition, the cravings of avarice, and the conflicts of party, there is no need of conscience to guarantee the integrity of rulers? The law of honor, were its maxims obeyed perfectly, would afford no security. "It is a system

of rules constructed by people of fashion, and calculated to facilitate their intercourse with one another, and for no other purpose." * It is the guardian of honorable men only. The public good is out of the question; right and wrong are terms unknown in this code. Its sole object is to enable unprincipled men to live together with politeness and good humor; men, whom neither the laws of their country, nor the retributions of eternity, can restrain from acts of mutual outrage; and who, by the expectation of instant death, by the pistol at the breast, must be restrained from unchristian provocation, and drilled into good behavior. It is for the interest of this *noble portion* of the human race that honor legislates. But for the common people, the *ignoble vulgar*, it has no concern. They, it seems, have no honor; or, if they have, laws, and courts, and fines, and constables, may suffice to take care of it.

Hence, the honor of a duelling legislator does not restrain him, in the least, from innumerable crimes which affect the peace of society. He may contemn the Saviour of men, and hate and oppose the religion of his country. He may be a Julian in bitterness, and, by swearing, cause the earth to mourn; in passion, a whirlwind; in cruelty to tenants, to servants, and to his family, a tiger. He may be a gambler, a prodigal, a fornicator, an adulterer, a drunkard, a murderer, and not violate the laws of honor. Nay, honor not only tolerates crimes, but, in many instances, it is the direct and only temptation to crime.

What has torn yonder wretches from the embraces of their wives and their children, and driven them to the field of blood — to the confines of hell? What nerves those arms, rising

* Paley's Philosophy.

to sport with life and heaven? It is honor; the pledge of patriotism, the evidence of rectitude! Ah, it is done! The blood streams, and the victim welters on the ground. And, see the victor coward running from the field, and, for a few days, like Cain, a fugitive and vagabond, until the first burst of indignation has passed, and the hand of time has soothed the outraged sensibility of the community; then, publicly, and as if to add insult to injustice, returning to *offer his services*, and to *pledge his honor*, that *your* lives and *your* rights shall be safe in his hand. Nor is this the only case where honor becomes the temptation to crime; it operates in all cases where the maxims of this infernal combination have attached disgrace to the performance of duty, and honor to the perpetration of iniquity. And, beside the crimes which honor tolerates, and the scarcely inferior number which it enjoins, there are a variety of cases where it will not restrain from treacheries confessedly dishonorable.

What security can a mere man of honor give, that he will not betray our interest in every case where it can be done without *detection?* What shall secure us when the price of perfidy is so high as to compensate for the disgrace of an *honorable sale?** What, where attachment to the public good would sacrifice popularity? For, in this case, the more tender his regard to reputation, and dread of disgrace, the more certainly will he abandon the public good, and pursue his private interest. What, also, when he may follow a multitude to do evil, and annihilate his disgrace by dividing it with many? What, when his reputation is already gone,

* A prime minister of England, after much experience, said that every man had his price: and, applied to men who have no fear of God before them, — who have no pledge of rectitude but "What will the world think of me?" — the justice of his opinion cannot reasonably be doubted.

before his term of service or his ability to do mischief expires? What, in those numberless cases, where imagined ingratitude on the part of the people shall impel wounded pride to an honorable revenge? What, where the disgrace of poverty, as often happens, is more dreaded than the disgrace of a dishonest act?

I know it is said that a man's principles and his private character are nothing to us. If his ability be adequate, and his politics correct, and his public conduct as yet irreproachable, this is sufficient. But are you prepared to be the dupes of such wild absurdity? According to this sentiment, a man may set his mouth against the heavens,—he may be a drunkard in the intervals of official duty, a prodigal, a tyrant, a mere savage in his family, — and still be trumpeted, by unprincipled politicians and electioneering hand-bills, as the great champion of liberty, the very Atlas on whose shoulders rests the destiny of his country. But what is a man's political creed, what is his past conformity to your wishes, when his profligate private life demonstrates that he is prepared to betray you the first moment he shall find it for his interest? Dispense with moral principle and private virtue, and all is gone. You can find no substitute; honor is a cobweb, and patriotism an empty name, in the hour of trial. The single circumstance that neither the interest nor the reputation of the duellist will come in competition with your interest, is your only security that, if able, he will not sport with your liberties as wantonly as he has sported with, or is prepared to sport with, the life of his neighbor. Admit that there are instances in which men, destitute of principle, have acted with integrity in public stations; can you tell me *how many thousands have betrayed their trust for want of it?* These are exempt cases,— the persons did not happen to be

tempted. But do you desire no better pledge of rectitude than the mere absence of temptation? Will you confide in thieves and swindlers to legislate, because two in a thousand, though utterly unprincipled, may have found it for their interest not to cheat you? It is in trying emergencies, when the price of perfidy is high, and temptation imperious, that unprincipled men are weighed in the balance and found wanting. And will you appoint cowards and traitors to command your armies, because they might answer in time of peace; or intrust your lives to quacks in medicine, because, under slight indispositions, they might suffice to administer herb-drink? Why does this lingering confidence in the duellist still survive the extinction of moral principle? One crime of equal magnitude, in any other case, would decide his fate forever. The failing merchant, convicted of dishonesty, is *recorded* a knave; the receipt of a bribe by a judge is irrevocable infamy; perjury cancels forever all confidence; the thief solicits in vain the public suffrage; the highway robber can find none to exercise charity, none to palliate his crime; and the common murderer, might he live, would be doomed to linger out a life of disgusting infamy. But the duellist, who, in cold blood, or with bitter malice and burning rage, murders his neighbor, can find enough to exercise charity, and palliate his crime: a whole state, a whole nation, to testify, by their votes, that they consider it nothing.

But, alas! the duellist, *frail man*, is overcome by temptation. *He* has peculiar sensibilities, habits of education, and modes of thinking, which, in this *one case*, led him astray, without inferring at all a general deficiency of principle, religious or moral.

In plain language, because the duellist is *educated* a duel-

list, the crime of wilful murder in him is very small, and is consistent with religious and moral principle. If men, then, are only *educated* to thieving, assassination, and robbery,— if, by habit and false reasoning, they are so familiarized to crime as to rob, and steal, and destroy life, without much consciousness of guilt,— *then*, indeed, they are *very honest men*, and are fit to superintend the affairs of the nation!

But, were it admitted,— did we ever know that some one duellist was, in fact, a man of principle, and overcome by stress of temptation only,— would it be proper to confide in him as a legislator? Would you, had his crime been common murder, an act of robbery or perjury, though you knew he had been surprised or thrust into it by powerful temptation? Would it not manifest him, if not unprincipled, at least too feeble and flexible to stand before the numerous and powerful temptations to which his situation would expose him? A coward may be an honest man, but certainly a coward should not be intrusted with the command of armies. Besides, this lightly passing over crimes of the deepest dye,— I may even say, this rewarding them with the profits and honors of the State,— confounds, in the public mind, the distinctions between virtue and vice, and weakens that abhorrence of crime which is the guardian of public morality. Elevate swindlers to office, and who shall guarantee the integrity of the common people? Elevate adulterers, and who will punish incontinence? Elevate murderers, and who will be the avengers of blood?

But, waiving all moral considerations, what security have we that the duellist will not, if intrusted with our liberties, desert us in the hour of danger? What security can we have, when it is in the power of every factious rival who can shoot straight to compel him to the field; and, by destroying

his life, to derange, perhaps to annihilate, the government? What if Washington, in the crisis of our fate, had fallen in a duel? What if the *governors*, the *senators*, the *judges* of the States, were so infatuated with the madness of honor, that, in the moment of peril, we could have no other security of their constancy than that no person should tempt them to hazard their lives, and put in jeopardy their country?

4. The system of duelling is a system of despotism, tending directly and powerfully to the destruction of civil liberty.

A free government is a government of laws, made by the people for the protection of life, reputation, and property. A despotic government is where life and all its blessings are subject to the caprice of an individual. Those maxims and practices, therefore, which remove life, reputation, and property, from under the protection of law, and subject them to the caprice of an individual, are the essence of despotism. Nor is it material whether this is done by open violence, or by the application of unlawful motives, which as effectually answer the purpose. Every man conforming to the laws of his country has a right to the peaceable enjoyment of life, and all its immunities. Nor has any individual a right, directly or indirectly, to interrupt this enjoyment. No man has a right to tempt his neighbor to renounce the protection of law, and much less to punish him with heavy penalties for refusing to do it.* But this is precisely the despotic privilege which duellists have arrogated to themselves. The man who refuses a challenge, so far as their accursed influence extends, is outlawed,— is branded with infamy, and exposed to perpetual insult. But what has he done? He has feared

* Hence, the mere *sending* of a challenge is punishable by law.

to offend his God; and, under trying temptations to the contrary, has bowed submissive to the laws of his country; and for this he is punished,—substantially punished, in a free country, without trial, without law, nay, even in opposition to law!

If the despotic principles of duelling terminated in theory, they might excite our compassion, as mere distempers of the brain; but their practical influence is powerful and fatal, as inimical to our rights in *fact* as it is in theory.—tending directly and powerfully to the destruction of civil liberty.

Equal laws are essential to civil liberty; but equal laws are far from satisfying the elevated claims of duellists. That protection which the law affords to them, in common with others, they despise. They must have more,—a right to decide upon and to redress their own grievances. "When we please," say they, "we will avail ourselves of the law; and when we please, we will legislate for ourselves. For the vulgar, the dull forms of law may suffice; but for a reputation so sacred, and for feelings so refined and sensitive, as ours, they are vastly inadequate. Nor shall they restrain our hand from the vindication of our honor, or protect the wretch who shall presume to impeach it." Is this liberty and equality? Are these gentlemen, indeed, so greatly superior to the people? Is their reputation so much more important? Are their feelings so much more sacred? Is pain more painful to them, or self-government less their duty than ours? Must we bear all injuries which the law cannot redress? Must we stifle our resentments, or, if we vent them in acts of murder, swing upon the gallows; while they with impunity express their indignation, and satiate with blood a revengeful spirit?

But education, it is said, has inspired these men with sen-

sibilities peculiar to themselves, for which the cold process of law has made no provision. So has the education of the savage given him peculiar feelings, for the gratification of which the dilatory forms of law are equally inadequate. But will you let the savage loose, with tomahawk and scalping-knife, because educational feelings can find no consolation in the regular administration of justice? The feelings for which the law makes no provision are feelings for which it ought not to provide,— ungodly feelings,— the haughtiness of pride and relentless revenge, and which, instead of a dispensation for indulgence, deserve the chastisement of scorpions. To reduce such unruly spirits, the law should brandish its glittering sword, and utter all its thunders. Nothing is needful, to make legal redress as adequate to duellists as to us, but habits of self-government. And are they not under the same obligation that we are to acquire these habits? And if they will not take the trouble to govern their temper,— if they will not encounter the self-denial which the laws of God and man inculcate,— if they will be savages in a civilized land,— let them be treated as savages. And when they murder, elevate them to the gallows, and not to posts of honor.

The administration of justice ought, above all things, to be impartial. The rich and the honorable ought to be equally liable to punishment for their crimes with the poor; and, according to their desert, punished with equal severity. But, while duellists bear sway, this can never be. It is a fact, that the man who steals a shilling is more liable to detection, and more sure to be punished, than the man who in a duel murders his neighbor. Is this equal? Shall petty thefts excite indignation and be punished with severity, while murderers, with bold impunity, walk on every side?

A sacred regard to law is indispensable to the existence of a mild government. In proportion as obedience ceases to be voluntary, and the contempt of law becomes common, must the nerves of government be strengthened, until it becomes in essence, if not in name, a monarchy. We must have protection; and the more numerous and daring the enemy, the more power must be delegated to subdue and control them. That contempt of law, therefore, which is manifested by the duellist, is a blow at the vitals of liberty. It is the more deadly, because, from the genius of our government, the example has a peculiar influence. In despotic governments the example of the legislator may not be so pernicious. Chains, dungeons, racks, and gibbets, may keep the people in their place, although their rulers should give themselves a license to sin. Viewed also at such an abject distance, the example loses much of its power. But, under the mild government of a republic, there is no such distance between the rulers and the ruled, and no such terrific restraints to deter from the imitation of their example. To elevate to office, therefore, duellists, the deliberate contemners of law, is to place their example in the most conspicuous point of view, and to clothe it with most woful efficacy to destroy public virtue. Select for your rulers men of profligate example, who contemn the religion and despise the laws of their country, and they need not conspire to introduce despotism; you will yourselves introduce it,— you will flee to it as the damned will flee to rocks and mountains, in the day of judgment, to shield them from the operation of more intolerable evils.

The tendency of duelling to restrain liberty of speech and of the press is also direct and powerful. The people have a right to investigate the conduct of rulers, and to scrutinize the character of candidates for office; and as the private and

moral character of a man is the truest index, it becomes them to be particular on this point. But who will speak on this subject, who will publish, when the duellist stands before him, with pistol at the breast? If a few, duellists themselves, and mad with ambition, will brave the danger, how many are there who will not? And what aggravates the restraint, the more unprincipled and vile the man, and the greater the need of speaking, the greater the danger of unveiling his enormity. While bent upon promotion, and desperate in his course, he is prepared to seal in death the lip that shall publish his infamy. What should we think of a law that forbade the people to speak of the immoralities of candidates for office,—which made death the penalty of transgression, and which produced annually as many deaths as this nefarious system of duelling? We should not endure it a moment; if Congress were to sanction by a law the maxims of duelling, it would produce a revolution. And will you bear encroachments upon liberty from lawless individuals, which you would not bear a moment from the government itself? Would you spurn from your confidence legislators who should make such laws, and will you by your votes clothe with legislative power individuals, who, in contempt of law, do the same thing?

Nor let any imagine that the influence of this engine of despotism is small; it is powerful already, and is every year becoming more so, as duelling increases; and God only knows where its influence will end. The actual encroachments of Britain, when we first began to resist them, were not one half so alarming as the encroachments of duellists. To have been parallel, she must have executed wantonly, without judge or jury, as many as have fallen in duels. What sensations would such conduct have excited! Had it depended on our votes merely, would England have continued to legislate?

And shall lawless despots, at this day, perform what all the fleets and armies of England could not?

Duelling, in its operation, exposes to additional risk and danger those who would rise to usefulness and fame in civil life. With what views can a Christian parent look to the law as a profession for a son, where, if he rise to fame, he must join the phalanx of murder, or, if he refuse, experience their united influence against him? If the road to Washington was beset with robbers,—if they sacrificed yearly as many as are now slain in duels,—could the wretches live unmolested? Their crimes notorious, could they mingle in society? Could they boast of their prowess, and glory in their shame? Could they enjoy the confidence of the people, and receive their suffrages, and be made the guardians of civil liberty?

5. The inconsistency of voting for duellists is glaring. To profess attachment to liberty, and vote for men whose principles and whose practices are alike hostile to liberty,—to contend for equal laws, and clothe with power those who despise them,—to enact laws, and intrust their execution to men who are the first to break them,—is a farce too ridiculous to be acted by freemen. In voting for the duellist, we patronize a criminal whom, in our law, we have doomed to die. With one hand we erect the gallows, and with the other rescue the victim; at one breath, declare him unfit to live, and the next, constitute him the guardian of our rights. Cancel, I beseech you, the laws against duelling, annihilate your criminal code, level to the ground your prisons, and restore to the sweets of society, and embraces of charity, their more innocent victims. Be consistent. If you tolerate one set of villains, tolerate them all; if murder does not stagger your confidence, let it not waver at inferior crimes.

In our prayers, we request that God would bestow upon us

good rulers, *just men, ruling in the fear of God.* But, by voting for duellists, we demonstrate the insincerity of such prayers; for when, by the providence of God, it is left to our choice whom we will have, we vote for murderers. Unless, therefore, we would continue to mock God by hypocritical prayers, we must cease praying for good men, or we must cease to patronize men of blood. Do we not pray also for the preservation of liberty, and the continuance of national prosperity? And do we not know that good rulers are the chosen instruments of the divine blessing; and that, when God would chastise a people, unprincipled rulers are the rod of his anger? When, therefore, the selection of rulers is left to ourselves, shall we disregard his chosen instruments of mercy, and expect his blessing? Shall we put into his hand the rod of his anger, and expect to escape chastisement?

6. To vote for the duellist is to assist in the prostration of justice, and indirectly to encourage the crime of duelling.

Laws in republics depend for their prompt execution upon a correct and efficient public sentiment. The highway robber need not publish his daring exploits in a newspaper, to attract notice. A common indignation glows in the public mind: in all directions the son of violence is pursued, and when arrested and convicted, is sure to die. In several districts of the United States, a murder committed in a duel would excite equal exertion to detect the murderer, who, on detection, would be equally sure to die. The great officers of government, and other influential characters, dare not, if disposed, connive at the crime. The public indignation, like a high swollen river, would sweep away any one who should presume to turn aside or obstruct its course. But, in other parts of the land, the frequency of the crime, and its immemorial impunity, has deadened the public feeling. Many disapprove,

but do not sufficiently abhor, the crime; they are *sorry*, but are not indignant. They *wish* the officers of government would execute the law, but do not *compel* them to do it. Duellists are apprized of this debilitated state of public feeling, and are, therefore, not afraid to contravene the feeble public will. It is not a torrent, unmanageable and dreadful, but a puny stream, which they dare to oppose, and which they have learned to manage.

When, therefore, a murder is committed in a duel, immediately a great bustle is made. The culprit is arrested, *or is to be arrested*,—but, alas! he cannot be found; or if found, alas! there are no witnesses; or if there are witnesses, alas! the indictment is defective, and this is the last we hear of it. The first effect of public indignation is a little feared. Justice may not as yet be "turned backward" without some little manœuvring; and this blustering is made just to amuse until the first emotion subsides; and when the danger is over, the sword of justice, drawn only to deceive, is returned to its scabbard. The criminal creeps from his hiding-place, triumphs in his guilt, and, if insulted, fights again. We blame our rulers; but by whom are such men made rulers, and by whose negligence are they emboldened to wink at this most accursed sin? Were the officers of justice men of moral principle, who really abhorred duelling, and desired to put a stop to it, would the laws be thus inefficacious? Would it be so difficult to make a law that should fasten upon the culprit,—so difficult to arrest, convict and execute? Is there any such difficulty in bringing to justice the thief, the robber, and the common murderer? I tell you, Nay; the traitor is in the citadel; we have ourselves put him there, knowing also that he would let the criminal go; of course, we are accessory to his escape, and to the prostration of justice, as really as if

with our own hands we unbarred and threw open the gates of his prison. Indeed, by removing the only restraints which duellists can feel, we indirectly encourage the crime. By appointing them to legislate, we remove all fear of legal punishment,— all fear of pecuniary loss,— all fear of disgrace. We say to the aspiring politician, "Be of good courage, and avenge yourself; it shall be no stain upon your character, no impediment to your promotion. We have made a law, indeed, but we mean nothing by it. If you *please* not to destroy your fellow-men, we shall be glad; but if you *do* please to destroy them, it shall not have the weight of a straw to prevent your elevation." By removing, in this way, all restraints from the commission of the crime, we encourage it, though indirectly, yet really and effectually, as if we rewarded the culprit from the public treasury. Nay, by elevating to important stations men whose hands are stained with blood, we do little less than reward them *for* their crimes; and it has been asserted, and by men long conversant in the affairs of state, that the fighting of a duel is a passport to honor.

7. The contempt with which duellists treat the opinions and feelings of the community is a reason why we should cease to confide in them.

The people, whatever men of honor may think of them, constitute the strength, the virtue and glory, of the nation; and their opinions and wishes demand respect from those who legislate for them. The feelings of the great body of the people are decidedly opposed to duelling. This is manifest from the laws on this subject, and from the fact that the mass of the people discard those notions of Gothic honor, and rest satisfied with that protection and redress which the laws afford. It is but a handful of men only, compared with the whole, that uphold this bloody system. That which by duel-

lists is denominated public opinion, and which constitutes the dire necessity of spilling each other's blood, is the opinion of duellists only,— the opinion of not more than one in a thousand of the inhabitants of the nation. But the opinion of this handful is, by those who compose it, deemed of far greater consequence than the opinion and feelings of the great mass of the people. Duellists well know our aversion to their crimes, our grief at their conduct, and our desires to wipe off this disgrace of a Christian land. But little do they care for our opinions or our feelings. They move in a sphere too much above us, to let themselves down to the standard of our conceptions, or to give themselves concern about our desires or aversions. When an election is pending, when they need our votes to gratify their ambition, or satiate their avarice, then, indeed, they sympathize most tenderly with the people. The people are everything; their wishes are sacred, and their voice is the voice of God. But let this end be accomplished, and a challenge or an insult be given, and neither liberty, nor patriotism, nor the voice of the people, nor the voice of God, can avail to deter them from deeds the most barbarous and despotic. Shall we, then, vote for men who treat with contempt our opinions and our feelings, who basely prostrate our laws, when we have nothing to bestow; and who again creep through all the dirty windings of hypocrisy, when their promotion depends on our will? What are all their professions of patriotism, contradicted by their conduct? And shall they deceive us still? Let them plead for liberty with the tongue of men and angels, and adore her cause with the fervor of seraphs,— they are hypocrites, mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

8. Withhold the public suffrage from the duellist, and the practice of fighting duels will speedily cease.

Two causes will insure this effect.

(1.) When duellists are expelled from all legislative influence, the law against this crime will be promptly executed. Duelling does not prevail now because the penalty of law is inadequate, but because it is never inflicted; and so long as duellists retain the confidence of the people, and are clothed with power, it never will be inflicted. We might as reasonably expect horse-jockeys, gamblers, and thieves, if intrusted with government, to execute the laws against themselves, as that duellists in office will give efficacy to the laws against duelling.

But let men who in this respect betray the confidence reposed in them,—who not only fight duels themselves, but have pleasure in those that do the same,—be driven from their stations, and their places supplied with men of firmness and principle, and the end is accomplished. The penalties of the law, uniformly and faithfully applied, will prevent duelling; and, to insure this, nothing is necessary but to expel traitors, and substitute rulers of a decided character,—men who, partaking of the public sentiment, will attempt in earnest to give to that sentiment, as expressed in the law, its entire efficacy.

(2.) The withholding of our suffrage from duellists will tend to annihilate the practice, by arraying the public opinion against it in such a manner that the real, unavoidable disgrace of fighting, will be greater than that of refusing to fight.

The reason why men of honor (falsely so called) pay homage to the law of honor, is because the maxims of this ghastly code are among a certain class of men assumed as their opinion, which opinion is made to affect, in a sensible manner, those who presume to disregard it. The opinion of

the great mass of the people is also just as well known; but with this important difference, that it inflicts no penalty on those who disregard it. It is vague, feeble, and inefficacious. But let the opinion of society on the subject of duelling be collected, combined, and expressed in the votes of the people, and it will operate most sensibly upon that class of men who now most despise it. It will involve a penalty which they cannot but feel, and which they cannot evade. No defect in the law, no absconding of witnesses, no flaw in the indictment, no connivance of the great, can come to their assistance in this dilemma. If they will violate our laws, they shall not be intrusted with power. If they will murder, we will invest with power men who will punish them. In this way we cut the sinews of duelling, and bind to good behavior by the motive which before impelled to the crime. The opinion of the people — that which is, in fact, public opinion — becomes prominent, assumes influence, and overwhelms the absurd opinions of bloody men. Motives of compassion and of justice both demand this expression of public sentiment.

These *honorable men* admit the sin and the folly of their deeds. They disclaim all motives of revenge or hatred. Their only plea is necessity; and the only necessity is the imperious mandate of public opinion. They even lament that such a state of things should exist; but while it does exist, they must fight, or encounter disgrace. Is it not our duty, then, to undeceive these deluded men, and to rescue from death these reluctant martyrs of honor? Must they be haunted all their days, and be driven to desperation, by a mere spectre of the imagination,— by a public opinion which has no being? Are we not bound to teach them their *mis-*

take, if it be such; and to wrest from their hands this *mere pretence*, if it be no more?

9. Withholding the public suffrage from duellists is the only method in which there is the least prospect of arresting the practice of duelling.

We may reason, and ridicule, and lament, and remonstrate, and threaten, and legislate, and multiply penalties,—and the evil will still progress. Environed by the subtilties of law, and shielded by the perverted patronage of men in office, regardless of our grief, and fearless of our indignation, they will laugh at our zeal, and defy our efforts. THERE IS NO WAY TO DEAL WITH THESE MEN, BUT TO MAKE THEM FEEL THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE PEOPLE; AND NO WAY TO EFFECT THIS, BUT TO TAKE THE PUNISHMENT OF THEIR CRIMES INTO OUR OWN HANDS. OUR CONSCIENCE MUST BE THE JUDGE, AND WE MUST OURSELVES CONVICT, AND FINE, AND DISGRACE THEM AT THE POLLS. HERE, AND NOWHERE BESIDE, WILL OUR VOICE BE HEARD, AND OUR WILL BECOME LAW.

10. The evils justly to be apprehended from the continuance of duelling call loudly upon us to awake in earnest to this subject, and apply with vigor the proposed remedy.

It every year robs our country of men qualified (this epidemic madness excepted) for extensive usefulness. It cuts down our young men, and fills the land with widows and with orphans. The tax is too heavy; the victims offered to Moloch are too numerous. Might the evil, however, be confined to its present limits, it would be less intolerable; but we have no ground to indulge such a hope. In Europe, where duelling originated, the great inequality of rank has usually prevented the practice from descending to the common walks of life. It is there the unenvied privilege of

great men to kill one another. But in our own country there is no such barrier. The genius of our government has inspired every man with a spirit of independence and self-importance,—a spirit desirable when duly regulated, but dreadful when perverted, and, in young men especially, very liable to be perverted. We are all honorable men; and if the laws of the land are insufficient to protect the reputation of one man, they are equally defective to all. If the military officer, the civil officer, and the lawyer, must take the protection of their reputation into their own hands, so may the merchant, the merchant's clerk, the gentleman, and the gentleman's son; so may the mechanic, the farmer, and the planter. And they not only may, but they will do it, if an end be not put to this lawless practice. The horrid evil will not be confined to cities; it will break out in the country. It will stalk through our towns, and desolate our villages. Let not these anticipations be deemed chimerical; they are legitimate inferences from the known principles of the human mind and the peculiar situation of our country; and they are justified also by experience. The mad example of Charles V. and Francis I., King of France, descended like a mighty torrent, from the highest elevations of rank, down to the humble vale of private life. Through all Europe the pulse of honor began to throb, and all orders of men caught the fever. The nobleman and the nobleman's servant, the general and the common soldier, the lawyer, the merchant, the tailor, and the hair-dresser, became suddenly inflated with the inspirations of honor. The forms of law were disregarded; every man became his own protector and avenger, until, in this crusade of honor, the earth smoked with the blood of its miserable inhabitants. "Much of the best blood in Christendom was shed, many useful lives sacrificed, and at

some periods war itself hath hardly been more destructive than these private contests of honor."*

In our own country, and by a similar infatuation, duelling is steadily progressing; the example of great men and rulers is sweeping all before it, and is bending its destroying course to the vale of common life. Instances have come to my knowledge of challenges given, by those whom our grandfathers would have called boys, to adjust by weapons of death their hasty disputes. Already, and far remote from cities, does the vapor of honor begin to swell with fancied importance many a stripling, leading him to threaten what, as yet, he has not courage to perform. This shows what effect the frequency of the crime, and the impunity attending it, is beginning to have upon youthful minds. The leaven has begun to operate; and if no stop be put to it, the time is not distant when every petty quarrel of hot-headed young men must be adjusted by powder and ball. In the southern and western States, such events are already frequent. The youth extensively are enrolled on the lists of honor, and are bound to attack and defend according to its rules. Expertness in firing the pistol is a qualification of indispensable attainment: and the Sabbath is often devoted to the most Christian employment of learning to shoot expertly.

The genius of our government favors, also, not only the descent of the practice, but multiplies to an unlimited extent the occasions of duelling. Political disputes are the usual provocation. These display their influence through every class of society. As our country increases in wealth, luxury and vice,—as parties multiply and become ardent,—these controversies will naturally become more keen and vindictive,

* Russell's Modern Europe.

until duelling will become a common alternative; until elections shall turn, not on the merits of the candidate, but on superior skill in aiming the pistol to destroy his competitor. I have been assured, that already, in certain parts of our Union, duelling is not an unknown expedient to secure an election, by removing out of the way a rival candidate. Indeed, in the city of New York, and in a public paper, it has been declared, that at a certain period there was a systematic scheme formed to take off by duelling certain leading characters of one political party, by some of the leading characters of another political party. The fact asserted is, in itself, by no means incredible; it is a natural consequence of duelling,—just what might be expected; and the duels which took place about that time, and the characters engaged, clothe the subject with an air of high probability.

Nor are the immediate effects of duelling the only consequences to be dreaded. The impunity attending the crime, the confidence reposed in duellists, and the honors bestowed upon them, contribute to diminish in the public mind the guilt of crimes generally. There is a relationship in crimes which renders familiarity with one a harbinger to familiarity with another. The wretch who has destroyed two or three fellow-creatures in a duel will feel little compunction at any crime. Nor can the moral sensibilities of a people familiarized to murder in duels, and accustomed to look upon criminals of this description with confidence and respect, be preserved, in full strength, in reference to other crimes. Duelling, therefore, while it destroys directly its thousands, destroys by its depraving influence its tens of thousands.

11. The present may be the only time in which it shall be practicable to suppress this great evil.

The practice of duelling is rapidly progressing, disseminating its infection, and deadening the public sensibility. The effect already is great and alarming. If not so, why does the crime shrink before the stern justice of New England, and rear its guilty head in New York, and stalk with bolder front as you pass onward to the south. If the effect is not great, why this distinction in crimes of the same class,—why so alive to the guilt of robbery, assassination, and murder of one kind, and so dead to the guilt of duelling? If the effect of duelling upon the public mind is not great, why is it that murder can be committed in open day,—the crime be made notorious, nay, proclaimed in the newspaper,—and the murderer remain unmolested in his dwelling? Why does he not flee? Why are not rewards offered by those authorized by the laws, and expresses hastened in all directions to arrest and bring to justice the guilty fugitive? Because no one is enough shocked at his crime to make these exertions. Because, if such measures were taken, the public mind would awake from its torpor,—duelling would become a disgraceful crime, and the criminal would be lost to himself and to his country. He could neither be *governor*, nor *senator*, nor *judge*. He would be exiled from public favor, immured in a dungeon, transported to the gallows, and launched into eternity. If the prevalence of duelling has not, and to an awful degree, affected the public mind, why such a number of half-apologists for the crime; and how can we so patiently hear, and candidly weigh, and almost admit, their arguments? Could you hear with equal patience assassination justified, though (as it well might be) by arguments equally conclusive? Why is it, if this deadly evil has not already palsied the feelings of the community, that even the members of our churches have heretofore, with so little hesitation, voted for

men of blood? Is Christianity compatible with murder? Can you patronize the murderer by granting him your suffrage, and not become a partaker in his sin? Admit as the mildest, and as in general the true construction, that this has been done by Christians ignorantly, not knowing often that those for whom they voted were duellists,— or inconsiderately, not realizing the enormity of the crime,— why do they not know? why do they not consider? The reason is obvious:

> "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
> As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
> Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

This is precisely our alarming state. We have sunk through all these grades of moral degradation. We endure, we pity, we embrace murderers. And what will be next? A total apathy to crime.

What is done, therefore, must be done quickly. Let the maxims of duelling once break out, and spread in the country, and infect the rising generation,— let the just abhorrence of the community be a little more effaced by the growing frequency of the crime,— and we are undone. There will be no place to make a stand. Our liberties will be lost, our bands will become brass, and our fetters iron; no man's life will be safe; the laws of the land will be a nullity; every man must tremble, and walk softly, and speak softly, lest he implicate his neighbor's honor, and put in jeopardy his own life; and duelling will become as common, as irremediable, and as little thought of, as assassination is in Spain, in Italy, and South America.

Then, indeed, will the descriptions of the prophet be horribly realized. *Judgment will be turned away backward,*

justice will stand afar off, truth will fall in the street, and equity be unable to enter. Yea, truth will fail, and he that departeth from evil will make himself a prey. None will call for justice; revenge and murder will be the order of the day. *We shall grope for the wall as the blind; we shall stumble at noon-day as in the night; we shall be in desolate places as dead men.*

Shall we sit and calmly await the approach of these evils? Shall we bow our neck to the yoke? Shall we thrust our hands into the manacles preparing for them? What if these evils may not be realized in our day,—have we no regard to posterity? What if every man, woman and child, may not fall in a duel,—is there nothing to be dreaded from the sword, or pestilence, or famine, because they do not extirpate our race?

12. The facility with which, in the way proposed, this evil may be suppressed, will render us forever inexcusable, will constitute us partakers in the sin, if we do not make the attempt.

There are, indeed, many duellists in our land, and many half-apologists for the crime, from whom no aid is to be expected. There are many too unprincipled, and others too indolent, to be engaged by considerations of duty; and there are some, and even professors of religion, whose strong party prejudices, and political attachments to duellists, will be liable to steel them against conviction, or impel them to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. But, after all these deductions, there are yet remaining multitudes, thousands and thousands, whose abhorrence of duelling, though diminished by the frequency of the crime, is still sufficient to overwhelm its abettors with infamy. Nothing is necessary to awaken and embody in one formidable phalanx of opposition the great

mass of our plain and honest people, but to place the crime, in its horrid aspect and fearful connections, full before them. Only let them see, and they will feel; let them feel, and they will act,— will hurl indignant every duellist whom they have elevated from his eminence, and consign to merited infamy every one who shall solicit their favor. Nor is it impracticable thus to exhibit the subject. Ministers of different denominations, all united, would be able to effect it perfectly. Let each, in his appointed sphere, make due exertion to enlighten his flock, and the fire of indignation would soon begin to blaze through all the nation. And if, beside such exertions, further efforts should be needful, the newspaper, the magazine, and tract, may be enlisted as auxiliaries.

Nor can any reasonably object to such conduct on the part of ministers; nor will any one probably attempt it, who does not, for himself or some favorite, fear the consequences. Our obligations are most solemn to lift up our voice, and to put forth our exertions, against this sin. Our God calls to us from heaven; the damned call to us from hell; the blood of murdered victims from the ground lifts up its voice, and mingles with the cry of the widow and the fatherless; the example of our Saviour, of the prophets, of the apostles, forbids us to be silent or inactive.

It is in vain to cry out "priestcraft," or "political preaching;" these watch-words will not answer here. The crime we oppose is peculiar to no party; it is common to all. It is a crime too horrid to be palliated, too threatening to be longer endured in officers of government. Any political effect would be the consequence merely, not the object, of our exertions. It would also be small and momentary; but, should it be great, such effect ought not to bring censure upon us, or alter the course of our duty. If we may not denounce duelling,

because men of political eminence are guilty of the crime, — because the enlightening of the consciences of our people would affect an election, — every crime would soon find a sanctuary in the example of some great politician. Our mouths would be shut; we might not whisper the guilt of crimes, lest, by awakening your consciences, it should produce some political effect.

It is practicable, then, and it is the duty of ministers to direct the attention of their people, and arouse their just indignation towards criminals of this description. Nor will it be difficult for the people, once awake and engaged, to effect their purpose.

If only the members of Christian churches become decided in their opposition to duelling, it will produce a sensation through the land. The votes of professed Christians of different denominations are too numerous and important to be thrown away. And will not the churches awake? Will professors of religion, a religion commanding "love to enemies," and breathing "peace on earth and good will to men," uphold deliberately, and encourage by their suffrage, the practice of duelling? On this ground only, a formidable stand may be made.

But the churches will not be left to stand alone. In every part of the nation there are multitudes, conscientious and patriotic, whose zealous coöperation may be expected. Voluntary associations may be formed, correspondences may be established, and a concert of action secured. And even should the contest be more arduous,—if, in the tempest of an election, all these exertions should seem to be swept away, and religion, and conscience, and patriotism, to be lost in the delirium of passion,— are there not, in every church, and in every congregation, a chosen few who would brave the storm;

whom no sophistry could deceive, no influence bend, and no passion move from their purpose? Are there not, in every parish, at least ten righteous persons, to avert the curse of Heaven, and commence a reformation? But ten persons in every congregation in the land would constitute a weight of influence ultimately decisive. In a government like ours, where a State is often almost equally divided, a few thousand votes are too precious to be lost. When, therefore, it comes once to be known that the fighting of a duel is a serious blot upon the character of a candidate, and that, in every district and in every town, there are considerate and conscientious people who will not vote for him, parties will not risk their cause upon the shoulders of such men; duellists will become unpopular candidates; and those will be selected who shall merit and insure your suffrage.

Even this county of Suffolk* is able, if disposed, to throw into the scale an important weight of influence against duelling. It is one of the oldest counties in the State, extensive, populous, united, and distinguished by its veneration for religion, its strong attachment to liberty, and the honest and peaceable deportment of its inhabitants. It embraces few, if any, duellists, or friends of duelling. Ministers, magistrates, and people, all, it is presumed, think alike on this subject. And, beside these advantages, it has often, in contested elections, been looked to, and may often again be, as holding, in some measure, the balance of the State. With these advantages, it may speak and be heard. Let it be known that even one county will not uphold despotism and murder, and the names of DESPOTS and MURDERERS will no longer disgrace your tickets of suffrage. The fighting of a duel will

* The reader will recollect that this discourse was delivered in Suffolk county, State of New York.

become a disgrace, — a mill-stone about the neck of aspiring ambition.

You have often lamented the prevalence of duelling, but have not known how, as individuals, to do anything to arrest the evil. Now, you perceive what you can do. The remedy is before you; it is simple, and easy, and certain; and if you do not apply it, if you continue to vote for duellists and thus to uphold the crime, you are partakers in the sin, and accountable for all the evils which will ensue, and which you may now so easily prevent.

Finally, the appointment of duellists to office will justly offend the Most High, and assuredly call down upon us the judgments of Heaven.

Duelling is a great national sin; with the exception of a small section of the Union, the whole land is defiled with blood. From the lakes of the north to the plains of Georgia, is heard the voice of lamentation and woe,— the cries of the widow and the fatherless. This work of desolation is performed often by men in office, by the appointed guardians of life and liberty. On the floor of Congress, challenges have been threatened, if not given; and thus powder and ball have been introduced as the auxiliaries of deliberation and argument. Oh, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon! Alas! it is too late to conceal our infamy; the sun hath shined on our guilt, and the eye of God with brighter beams surveys the whole. He beholds and he will punish. His quiver is full of arrows, his sword is impatient of confinement; ten thousand plagues stand ready to execute his wrath; conflagration, tempest, earthquake, war, famine, and pestilence, wait his command only, to cleanse the land from blood, — to involve in one common ruin both the murderer and those who tolerate his crimes. Atheists may scoff,

but there is a God, — a God who governs the earth in righteousness, — an avenger of crimes, the supporter and destroyer of nations. And as clay is in the hand of the potter, so are the nations of the earth in the hand of God. At what instant he speaks concerning a nation, to pluck up, to pull down, and destroy it, if that nation repent, God will avert the impending judgment. And at what instant he shall speak concerning a nation, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in his sight, he will arrest the intended blessing, and send forth judgments in its stead. Be not deceived: the greater our present mercies and seeming security, the greater is the guilt of our rebellion, and the more certain, swift, and awful, will be our calamity. We are murderers, a nation of murderers, while we tolerate and reward the perpetrators of the crime. And shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

But, it will be said, especially in cases of contested elections, if you refuse to vote for this man because he is a duellist, his opponent, a worse man, will come in.

A worse man cannot come in. The duellist is a murderer; and is a man's difference from you in political opinion more criminal than murder? And will you vote for a murderer, a despot, proud, haughty and revengeful, to keep out another man, perhaps equally qualified and of a fair fame, merely because he thinks not in politics exactly as you do? To what will such bigotry lead? There will soon be no crime too gross to be overlooked by party men, and no criminal too loathsome and desperate to float into office on the tide of party. When the violence of competition rises so high in our country as to lead parties, in their struggles for victory, to tread down the laws of God, disregarding entirely the moral characters of candidates for office; if their being on our side will sanctify

their crimes, and push them reeking with blood into office; the time is not distant when we shall have no liberties to protect. Such a people are too wicked to be free; and God will curse them, by leaving them to eat of the fruit of their way.

But suppose the opponent of the duellist, beside his political heresy, to be a bad man also, and guilty of the same crime? If I do not vote for the man on my side in politics, will not this be helping his antagonist, and will not this be as bad as if I voted directly? No. You are accountable for your own conduct only. If other people put into office a bad man, whom you could not keep out but by voting for one equally bad, for their conduct you are not accountable. It is certainly a different thing whether a vile man comes into power *by* your agency directly, or in *spite* of it.— But suppose the duellist, in all respects, excepting this crime, is a better man than his opponent,— of two evils may we not choose the least? Yes, of two natural evils you may; if you must lose a finger or an arm, cut off the finger; but of two sinful things you may choose neither; and, therefore, you may not vote for one bad man, a murderer, to keep out another bad man, though even a worse one. It is to do evil, that good may come; and of all who do this the apostle declares, "their damnation is just."— What must we do, then, in those cases where the characters of the candidates are such as that it would be sinful to vote for either of them? Vote for neither, and in future you will not be insulted by such candidates for suffrage. Let those who stand behind the curtain and move the springs know that you have consciences, and that you will be guided by them, and they will take care that you shall not be compelled to throw away your votes.

But perhaps the liberties of our country are at stake;—

might we not for once, and on such an emergency, vote for a duellist? The same song has been sung at every election these twenty years, and by each party. It is an electioneering trick to excite your fears, to awaken your prejudices, to inflame your passions, to overpower your consciences, and to get your vote, whether right or wrong.

But suppose your liberties are in danger;—if they are so far gone as to depend on the election of one man, and that man a tyrant,—a murderer,—they are gone irretrievably. Beside the absurdity of appointing a *murderer* to protect life, and a *despot* to protect liberty, it is to be remembered that God is our only efficient protector. Men are merely instruments; but will God bless such instruments, selected in contempt of his authority, and rescued from the sword of his justice? All attempts to avert perdition by means at war with the precepts of Heaven will prove abortive; you hatch the cockatrice egg, and weave the web of the spider. If your liberties are in danger, reform,—pray,—and call to your aid men of rectitude, men of clean hands, whose counsels God may be expected to bless.

"But it is difficult to know in all cases who are good men." True; and will you therefore vote for those whom you know to be bad men? Rather discard those whom you know to be bad, and scrutinize critically the characters of those who profess to be good, and, after your utmost care, you will be sufficiently exposed to deception.

But the reply is ever at hand, "If they will fight, let them fight and kill each other; the sooner we get rid of them, the better." And are you prepared to intrust your lives, and all dear to you, to such men; to men whom you confess to be a nuisance, and whose death would be a public blessing? Beside, there is no such thing as killing all; the example

of the duellist is a wide-spreading contagion Every duel that is fought inspires twenty, perhaps a hundred, with the same accursed frenzy; and the blood of duellists is the seed of duelling, as really as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

"But why so vehement against duelling in particular?" Because, at present, it is a great and alarming national sin; because no other crime with such shameless effrontery bids defiance to the laws of God and man; because no other crime is so palliated, justified, and with such impunity sanctioned by the example of the great; and, of course, no other crime has so alarming an aspect upon the principles of our young men, and the moral sensibilities of our country. I may add, that no other description of criminals, if they escape with impunity, may publish their crimes, glory in their shame, and still be rewarded with the confidence and honors of their country. The crisis is an awful one; and this apathy to a crime of the deepest dye, is a prelude of approaching death. But, though there is a peculiar reason for attempting to arouse the listless attention of the public to this sin, there are *decisive objections* to the appointment to office of any immoral man. The prodigal, the drunkard, the profane, the Sabbath-breaker, the adulterer, the gambler, are all disqualified to act as legislators; and no man with an enlightened conscience can vote for them.

"But if we are so critical in our scrutiny of character, we shall never be able to find men duly qualified to manage our affairs." Most humiliating confession! But how has it come to pass (if true) that so many public characters are immoral men? It is because we, the people, have not even requested them to behave better. We have never made it necessary for them to be moral. We have told them, and

we have told our youth who are rising to active life, that private character is a useless thing, as it respects the attainment of our suffrage. We have told them that, if they pleased, they might associate for drunkenness and midnight revelry, pour contempt upon the institutions of religion, neglect the worship of God, and spend the Sabbath in gambling and intemperance, and still be esteemed hallowed patriots. If it be true that a strict scrutiny of character would exile from office many who now fill public stations, it is our *criminal negligence* that has brought this to pass. But the inference, that setting up moral character as a test would leave us destitute of proper candidates, is groundless; — it is the very way to multiply them. Let it once be made known that a fair private character is indispensable to the attainment of public suffrage, and reformations will take place. And, besides this, our young men will be growing up to habits of virtue, under the guardian influence of this restraint. At first, you may encounter a little self-denial, by dismissing men of irregular lives, in whom you have been accustomed to confide. But their places will soon be supplied by a host of men of fair fame, and better qualified to serve their country.

But, allowing that a proper exercise of suffrage would restrain from the practice of fighting duels all actually concerned, or expecting to be concerned, in civil life, how should this reclaim those who have no such expectation, and are no way affected by the votes of the people? How would it restrain military and naval officers, men usually the most addicted to the crime?

Ans. 1. The prospect of success, though an encouragement, is not the chief ground of obligation to withhold our

votes from duellists. It is sinful to vote for them, even though withholding our votes would not reclaim an individual.

2. If the method proposed would reclaim even men immediately concerned, or expecting to be concerned, in government, the good effected would be great. Laws do much good, although they do not entirely extinguish crimes.

3. The example of men in civil life subtracted from the support of this crime, and arrayed against it, would render the practice dishonorable among gentlemen of every description. Military officers are citizens, as well as officers; and that conduct which is deemed disgraceful by gentlemen in civil life will soon be felt to be such, and will be abandoned, by military and naval officers. And were such an effect less certain, it might be made certain by the exercise of that discretion which the civil ruler possesses in the appointment of officers. Let our legislators cease to fight duels, and desire to extinguish the practice of duelling, and they would soon fill the army and the navy with commanders who would be disposed and able to second their views.

And now let me ask you solemnly, with these considerations in view, will you persist in your attachment to these guilty men? Will you any longer either deliberately or thoughtlessly vote for them? Will you renounce allegiance to your Maker, and cast the Bible behind your back? Will you confide in men void of the fear of God, and destitute of moral principle? Will you intrust *life* to MURDERERS, and *liberty* to DESPOTS? Are you patriots, and will you constitute those legislators who despise you, and despise equal laws, and wage war with the eternal principles of justice? Are you Christians, and, by upholding duellists, will you deluge the land with blood, and fill it with widows and with orphans? Will you aid in the prostration of justice,— in

the escape of criminals,— in the extinction of liberty? Will you place in the chair of State, in the senate, or on the bench of justice, men who, if able, would murder you for speaking truth? Shall your elections turn on expert shooting, and your deliberative bodies become a host of armed men? Will you destroy public morality, by tolerating, yea, by rewarding, the most infamous crimes? Will you teach your children that there is no guilt in murder? Will you instruct them to think lightly of duelling, and train them up to destroy or be destroyed in the bloody field? Will you bestow your suffrage, when you know that, by withholding it, you may arrest this deadly evil,— when this, too, is the only way in which it can be done, and when the present is perhaps the only period in which resistance can avail,— when the remedy is so easy, so entirely in your power,— and when God, if you do not punish these guilty men, will most inevitably punish you?

If the widows and the orphans which this wasting evil has created, and is yearly multiplying, might all stand before you, could you witness their tears, or listen to their details of anguish? Should they point to the murderers of their fathers, their husbands, and their children, and lift up their voice and implore your aid to arrest an evil which had made them desolate, could you disregard their cry? Before their eyes could you approach the poll, and patronize, by your vote, the destroyers of their peace? Had you beheld a dying father conveyed, bleeding and agonizing, to his distracted family,— had you heard their piercing shrieks and witnessed their frantic agony,— would you reward the savage man who had plunged them in distress? Had the duellist destroyed your neighbor,— had your own father been killed by the man who solicits your suffrage, — had your son, laid low by his

hand, been brought to your door pale in death and weltering in blood, — would you then think the crime a small one? Would you honor with your confidence, and elevate to power by your vote, the guilty monster? And what would you think of your neighbors, if, regardless of your agony, they should reward him? And yet, such scenes of unutterable anguish are multiplied every year. Every year the duellist is cutting down the neighbor of somebody. Every year, and many times in the year, a father is brought dead or dying to his family, or a son laid breathless at the feet of his parents; and every year you are patronizing by your votes the men who commit these crimes, and looking with cold indifference upon, and even mocking, the sorrows of your neighbor. Beware,— I admonish you to beware, and especially such of you as have promising sons preparing for active life,— lest, having no feeling for the sorrows of another, you be called to weep for your own sorrow; lest your sons fall by the hand of the very murderer for whom you vote, or by the hand of some one whom his example has trained to the work of blood!

With such considerations before you, why do you wish to vote for such men? What have they done for you, what can they do, that better men cannot as happily accomplish? And will you incur all this guilt, and hazard all these consequences, for nothing? Have you no religion, no conscience, no love to your country, no attachment to liberty, no humanity, no sympathy, no regard to your own welfare in this life, and no fear of consequences in the life to come? O, my countrymen, awake! Awake to crimes which are your disgrace,— to miseries which know not a limit,— to judgments which will make you desolate!

SERMON III.

A REFORMATION OF MORALS PRACTICABLE AND INDISPENSABLE.

"Therefore, oh thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" EZEKIEL 33: 10.

AT the time this direction was given to the prophet, the nation of Israel had become very wicked, and were suffering in captivity the punishment of their sins; and yet they did not reform. They affected to doubt whether, if they did reform, the Most High would pardon them; and if he would, it would afford them no consolation, for reformation, they insisted, had become hopeless. "Our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" The burden has increased, until we are crushed beneath it; the disease has progressed, until it has become incurable.

They were correct in the inference that, if they did not reform, they must die; but they erred lamentably in the conclusion that reformation was hopeless.

To wipe off such an aspersion from his character, and to banish from the minds of his people such desponding apprehensions, the Most High condescends to expostulate with them. Have I any pleasure in the death of him that dieth? Is it my fault that nations are wicked? Do I constrain them

to sin, or prevent their reformation? "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

We are brought, therefore, by the text and its connections, to the doctrine —

THAT A WORK OF REFORMATION, IN A TIME OF GREAT DECLENSION, IS A DIFFICULT, BUT NOT AN IMPRACTICABLE WORK.

In the illustration of this doctrine, it is proposed,

I. To consider some of the difficulties which may be expected to impede a work of reformation.

II. To show that such a work is, notwithstanding, entirely practicable.

III. To consider some of the ways in which it may be successfully attempted; and,

IV. The motives to immediate effort.

With respect to the difficulties which may be expected to attend a work of reformation, one obvious impediment will be found in the number and character of those who must be immediately affected by such a work.

The sons of Belial, in a time of declension, are numerous and daring. Emboldened by impunity, they have declared themselves independent both of God and man, and are leagued by a common interest and a common feeling to defend their usurped immunities. They are watchful and zealous; and the moment an effort is made to execute the laws, every mouth is open against the work; and their clamors, and sneers, and threatenings, and lies, like the croakings of Egypt, fill the land.

This direct opposition may be expected to receive from

various sources collateral aid. In this wicked world, where the love of money is the root of evil, there are not a few who traffic in the souls and bodies of men. Not immoral always in their own conduct, they thrive by the vices of other men; and may be tempted to resist a reformation which would dry up these impure sources of revenue. They would not justify intemperance, nor the means of promoting it; but pretexts are never wanting to conceal the real motives of men, and justify opposition to whatever they deem inconsistent with their interest. Though reformation, therefore, might be admitted to be desirable, either the motives of those who make the attempt, or the means by which they make it, will always be wrong; and it will be impossible ever to devise a right way, till their interest is on the other side. In many cases, it is to be hoped that integrity would get the victory over cupidity; but, in many more, it is to be feared that avarice, secretly or openly, would send recruits to the standard of opposition.

This phalanx may receive, also, some augmentation from those whose pride may be wounded through the medium of their unhappy relatives. They could endure to see them live in infamy, and die in despair, while they shrink from the imagined disgrace of applying a remedy which may rescue the victim, or limit the influence of his pestilent example. How long shall it be ere men will learn that *sin* is infamy, and that *reformation* is glory and honor?

To the preceding must be added the opposition of all the timid, falsely called, peace-makers.

They lament bitterly the prevailing evils of the day, and multiply predictions of divine judgments and speedy ruin; but if a voice be raised or a finger be lifted to attempt a reformation, they are in a tremor lest the peace of society be

invaded. Their maxim would seem to be, "Better to die in sin, if we may but die quietly, than to purchase life and honor by contending for them. If men will be wicked, let them be wicked, if they will but be peaceable." But the mischief is, men freed from restraint will be wicked, and will not be peaceable. No method can be devised more effectual to destroy the peace of society, than tamely to give up the laws to conciliate the favor of the flagitious. Like the tribute paid by the degenerate Romans to purchase peace of the northern barbarians, every concession will increase the demand, and render resistance more hopeless.

Another class of men will encamp very near the enemy, through mere love of ease.

They would have no objection that vice should be suppressed, and good morals promoted, if these events would come to pass of their own accord; but, when the question is asked, "What must be done?" this talk of action is a terrific thing; and if, in their panic, they go not over to the enemy, it is only because the enemy also demands courage and enterprise. In this dilemma, it is judged expedient to put in requisition the resources of wisdom, and gravely to caution against rashness, and innovation, and zeal without knowledge, until all about them are persuaded that the safest and wisest and easiest way is to do nothing.

There is another class of men, not too indolent, but too exclusively occupied with schemes of personal enterprise, to bestow *their* time or labor upon plans which regard only the general good.

If *their* fields bring forth abundantly, if *their* profession be lucrative, if *they* can buy and sell and get gain, it is enough. Society must take care of itself. Distant consequences are not regarded, and generations to come must provide for their

own safety. The stream of business hurries them on, without the leisure of a moment, or an anxious thought concerning the general welfare.

Another impediment to be apprehended, when the work of reformation is attempted, is found in the large territory of neutral ground, which, on such occasions, is often very populous.

Many would engage in the enterprise cheerfully, were they quite certain it could be done with perfect safety. But perhaps it may injure their interest, or affect their popularity. They take their stand, therefore, on this safe middle ground, — they will not oppose the work, for perhaps it may be popular; and they will not help the work, for perhaps it may be unpopular. They wait, therefore, till they perceive whether Israel or Amalek prevail, and then, with much self-complacency, fall in on the popular side. This neutral territory is especially large in a republican government, where so much emolument, and the gratification of so much ambition, depend upon the suffrages of the people. It requires no deep investigation to make it manifest to the candidate for suffrage that, if he lend his influence to prevent travelling on the Sabbath, the Sabbath-breaker will not vote for him; if he lay his hand upon tippling-shops and drunkards, the whole suffrage of those who are implicated will be turned against him. Hence, many who should be a terror to evil-doers will bear the sword in vain. They will persuade themselves that theirs is a peculiar case, and that it is not best for them to volunteer in the work of reformation.

To reduce the power of this temptation, it may be laid down as a maxim, that when the toleration of crimes becomes the price of public suffrage,— when the people will not endure the restraint of righteous laws, but will reward magistrates

by their suffrage who violate their oath, and suffer them to sin with impunity,— and when magistrates will sell their consciences and the public good for a little brief authority, then the public suffrage is of but little value, for the day of liberty is drawing to a close, and the night of despotism is at hand. The people are prepared to become slaves; and the flagitious to usurp the government, and rule them with a rod of iron. No compact formed by man is more unhallowed or pernicious than this tacit compact between rulers and the people to dispense with the laws, and tolerate crimes.

In the midst of these difficulties, there are not a few who greatly magnify them by despondency. Like the captive Israelites, they sit down, and fold their hands, and sigh, and weep, and *wish* that something might be done, but inculcate unceasingly the disheartening prediction, that nothing can be done. "*It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*" Because the work cannot be done at once, they conclude that it can never be done. Because *all* that might be desirable cannot, perhaps, ever be obtained, they conclude that *nothing* can be obtained. Talk of reformation, and the whole nation, with all its crimes, rises up before them, and fills them with dismay and despair. It seems never to have occurred to them, that if we cannot do great good, it is best to do a little; and that, by accomplishing with persevering industry all that is practicable, the ultimate amount may be great surpassing expectation.

There is yet another class of people, who by no means despair of deliverance, but they have no conception that

human exertion will be of much avail. "If we are delivered, God must deliver us, and we must pray and wait till it shall please him to come and save us." But, upon this principle, we may pray and wait forever, and the Lord will not come. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of means; and though the excellency of the power belongs to him exclusively, human instrumentality is indispensable.

It is by no means improbable that some may be aroused to oppose any special efforts at reformation, merely from their *novelty*. It is lamentable that such efforts should be a novelty in a world where they are always so necessary to keep back the encroachments of vice,—but so it is. If the exertions, however good and proper, have not been made before, it seems to be with some a valid reason why they never should be made.—"What new thing is this? Did our fathers ever do so?" They had not the same occasion. But because they did not make special efforts to repel an enemy which did not assail them, shall we neglect to resist an enemy which is pouring in like a flood, and threatening to sweep us away? There are some who look with cold philosophic eye upon the progress of crimes, as a part of that great course of events which will roll on resistless, in spite of human endeavor. And we know that the genius of the government, the progress of science, and the refinement of wealth and luxury, will draw after them a train of consequences which no human efforts can prevent. But are these consequences evil only? Are not certain vices left behind in the rude age, and certain virtues produced by the age of refinement? If there be greater facilities of committing crimes, are there not also increased facilities of preventing them? And if the balance be, on the whole, against us, is this an argument that we can do nothing?—or only that we should double our diligence as dangers

increase? Because nations have not resisted this tide of human events, does it follow that it cannot be resisted? May not the deleterious causes be modified and counteracted, and their results delayed, if not averted? Will the Christian religion and its institutions exert no saving influence in our favor? Because Greece and Rome, who had not this precious system, perished by their vices, is it certain that nations must perish now who experience its preserving influence? We have seen what idols can do, and we have before us the results of atheism. Let us now, with double diligence, water the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; and not despair of its restoring influence, till the experiment has been faithfully made, and has failed.

But not a few, after all, it may be feared, will stand aloof from the work of reformation, from the persuasion that we are in no danger. "The world is no worse than it always has been, and this pretence of growing wickedness is only a song of alarm sung by superstition, from age to age." Surely, then, if we may credit testimony, the world has been uniformly bad enough to make reformation desirable; and if, without special efforts, it has been stationary, the prospect of improvement by exertion is bright, and we are utterly inexcusable if we do not make the attempt.

But is it true that nations do not decline? Whence, then, the punishment of the Israelites for this sin, and whence the maxim we have just combated, that they *must* and *will* decline? Were the morals of the Roman empire as good, when it was sold at auction, as at any antecedent period? Was the age of Charles the Second in England as favorable to virtue as any preceding age? Did the late war produce in our own land no change for the worse? Are the morals of New England as pure now as they ever have been? Is

the God of heaven as universally worshipped in the family? Are children as much accustomed to subordination, and as faithfully instructed in religion? Are the laws against immorality as faithfully executed, and the occasions for their interference as few, as at any former period? Has there been no increase of slander, falsehood, and perjury? Is the Sabbath-day remembered and kept holy with its ancient strictness? Did our fathers journey, and labor in the field, and visit, and ride out for amusement, on that holy day, and do these things with impunity? Has there been no increase of intemperance? Was there consumed, in the days of our fathers, the proportion of five gallons of ardent spirits for every man, woman and child, in the land; and at an expense more than sufficient to support the Gospel, the civil government, and every school and literary institution? Did our fathers tolerate tippling-shops all over the land, and enrich merchants, and beggar families, by mortgaging their estates to pay the expenses of intemperance? Did the ardent spirit consumed by laborers amount, not unfrequently, to almost half the price of their labor; and did they faint often ere the day was past, and fail before the summer was ended, and die of intemperance in the midst of their days? It is capable of demonstration, that the vigor of our countrymen, the amount of productive labor, and their morals, are declining together, under the influence of this destructive sin.

We are to show,

II. That, notwithstanding all these impediments, a reformation is entirely practicable.

If it were not practicable, why should it be commanded, and disobedience be followed with fearful punishment? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Are not all his requisitions according to what a man hath, and not according

to what he hath not? The commands of God are the measure and the evidence of human ability. He is not a hard master, reaping where he has not sowed, and gathering where he has not strawed. The way of the Lord is not unequal: he never demands of men the performance of impossibilities. We conclude, therefore, that reformation is practicable, because it is the unceasing demand of Heaven, that nations, as well as individuals, do turn from their evil ways.

But facts corroborate theory. Reformations great and difficult have been achieved. Such was the reformation from Popery, begun by Luther. Who, before the event, would have conceived it possible, that an individual could awake half Europe from the slumber of ages, and shed upon the nations that light which is shining more and more to the perfect day?

The abolition of the slave-trade in England, and in our own country, is a memorable exhibition of what may be done by well-directed, persevering efforts. The inhuman traffic was sanctioned by custom, defended by argument, and, still more powerfully, by a vast monied capital embarked in the trade. It is not yet fifty years since this first effort was made,—and now the victory is won. Who produced this mighty revolution? A few men at first lifted up their voice, and were reinforced by others, till the immortal work was done.

A thousandth part of the study, and exertion, and expense, and suffering, endured to achieve our independence, would be sufficient, with the divine blessing, to preserve our morals, and perpetuate our liberties, forever. Should a foreign foe invade us, there would be no despondency; every pulse would beat high, and every arm would be strong. It is only

when criminals demand the surrender of our laws and institutions, that all faces gather paleness, and all hearts are faint. Men who would fly to the field of battle to rescue their country from shame tremble at the song of the drunkard, and flee, panic-struck, before the army of the aliens.

But we have facts to produce,—facts, more decisive than a thousand arguments,— to prove that such reformation as we need is practicable.

Desperate as the state of the Jews was in their own estimation, they were reformed, and did not, at that time, pine away and die in their sins. And never, perhaps, was such a work attended with circumstances of greater difficulty. The whole order of God's worship had been superseded by the captivity, and was again to be restored. Many of the people had contracted unlawful marriages; and husbands and wives were to be separated, and parents and children. Some had been in the habit of treading the wine-press on the Sabbath-day, and bringing in sheaves, and wine, and grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens. The people held also constant intercourse with Syrian merchants, who came into their city on the Sabbath, and traded with them. But, great as were the difficulties, Nehemiah, and Ezra, and the elders of the land, undertook, and, by the help of God, accomplished, the work of reformation.

Other efforts of the same kind have been crowned with similar success. A society was established in London, about the year 1697, to suppress vice, by promoting the execution of the laws. The moral state of the city and nation at that time, and the success of their association, are thus described by a respectable historian:

"It is well known, to our shame, that profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness, and open lewdness, and profana-

tion of the Lord's day, have been committed with great impunity, and without control, without either shame or fear of laws, so that they were seen and heard at noon-day, and in the open streets. Debauchery had diffused itself through the whole body of the nation, till, at last, our morals were so corrupted that virtue and vice had with too many changed their names. It was reckoned breeding to swear, gallantry to be lewd, good humor to be drunk, and wit to despise serious things. In this state of things, reformation was indeed talked of as an excellent thing, but vice was looked upon as too formidable an enemy to be provoked; and public reformation was thought to be so difficult a thing, that those who gave it very good words thought it not safe to set about it. When things were in this dismal and almost desperate state, it came into the hearts of five or six private gentlemen to engage in this hazardous enterprise. This was such an undertaking as might well be expected soon to alarm the enemy, and which the patrons of vice would attempt to defeat, before any progress could be made; and so it proved. The champions of debauchery put themselves in array to defend their infamous liberties, to ridicule, to defame, and to oppose, this design. And others, whom in charity we could not look upon as enemies, were forward to censure these attempts, as the fruit of an imprudent zeal. But, notwithstanding a furious opposition from adversaries, and the unkind neutrality of friends, these gentlemen not only held their ground, but made advances into the territory of the enemy. The society, commencing with five or six, soon embraced numbers and persons of eminence in every station. In imitation of this society, and for the same purpose, other societies were formed in every part of the city, and among the sober of almost every profession and occupation. Beside these,

there were about thirty-nine religious societies, in and about London, who, among other objects, made that of reformation a prominent one.

"The effects of these combinations were favorable beyond the most sanguine expectation. From their vigilance and promptitude, the growing vices of the day were checked, insomuch that it was soon found difficult to detect a single criminal in the streets and markets, where, a little before, horrid oaths, curses, and imprecations, might be heard, day and night. Multitudes of drunkards, profaners of the Lord's day, besides hundreds of disorderly houses, were brought to justice, and such open vices suppressed. Nor were the good effects of these associations limited to the city. They soon extended to most of the principal towns and cities in the nation, to Scotland and Ireland; so that a great part of the kingdom have been awakened in some measure to a sense of duty, and thereby a very hopeful progress is made towards a general reformation."

Similar societies have been formed in England, at different times, ever since. In 1802, a very respectable society of the above description was established in London. It experienced, at first, most virulent opposition, but has completely surmounted every obstacle, and now commands fear, and respect, and gratitude. Such has been its influence in preventing crimes, that at one annual meeting, the number of convictions reported was a hundred and seventy-eight; at the next, only seventy. As it respects the observation of the Sabbath, particularly, the whole city of London exhibits, to a considerable degree, a new face. A vast number of shops which used to be open on that day are closed. The butchers of several markets have thanked the society for compelling them to an act which they find productive of so much comfort to them-

selves; and have even associated to secure that triumph which the labors of the society had won.

Their useful and disinterested labors have received the commendation and thanks of the lord chief justice, of more than one of the judges, and of a variety of magistrates. "We desire also to bring our gift to their altar," says the Christian Observer, from which work we have taken this account, "and to add the feeble testimony of our opinion, that this society deserves well of its country."

In this country, about the year 1760, a society was formed in the State of Maryland, to aid the civil magistrate in the execution of the laws. And so well, it is said, did the society succeed, as to induce numbers in different States to imitate their example. From that time to the present, similar associations have been formed in various places, as exigencies have demanded; and with good effect, whenever their exertions have been made with prudence and decision.

We consider the fact, therefore, as now established, that reformation in a season of prevailing moral declension is entirely practicable. And if it be so, it is a glorious fact, shedding light upon the darkness of the present day.

We are to consider,

III. Some of the ways in which this great work may be successfully attempted.

And doubtless, in the first place, the public attention must be called to this subject, and the public mind must be impressed with a proper sense of danger, and of the necessity of reformation.

From various causes, nations are prone to sleep over the dangers of moral depravation, till their destruction comes upon them. A small portion only, of the whole mass of crimes, is seen at any one point. A few tippling-shops are

observed in a particular place, impoverishing families, and rearing up drunkards; but it is not considered that thousands, with like pestilential influence, are at work all over the land, training up recruits to hunt down law and order. A few instances are witnessed of needless travelling, or labor, or amusement, on the Sabbath, which excite a momentary alarm. But it is not considered that a vast army,— probably three millions of people,—are assailing, at the same time, this great bulwark of Christian lands.

The progress of declension is also so gradual as to attract, from day to day, but little notice, or excite but little alarm. Now, this slow but certain approximation of the community to destruction must be made manifest. The whole army of conspirators against law and order, and the shame, and the bondage, and the woe, which they are preparing for us, must be brought out, and arrayed before the public eye.

This exposition of public guilt and danger is the appropriate work of Gospel ministers. They are watchmen set upon the walls of Zion, to descry and announce the approach of danger. And if, through sloth, or worldly avocations, or fear of man, they blow not the trumpet at the approach of the enemy, and the people perish, the blood of the slain will the Lord require at their hands. Civil magistrates are also ministers of God, attending continually upon this very thing. It is their exclusive work "to see to it that the commonwealth receives no detriment." Indeed, every man is bound to be vigilant, and firm, and unceasing, in this great work. And, by sermons, and conversation, and tracts, and newspapers, and magazines, and legislative aid, the point may be gained. The public attention may be called up to the subject, and just apprehensions of danger may be excited; and when

this is done, the greatest danger is past, — the work is half accomplished.

The next thing to be attempted is the reformation of the better part of the community.

In a time of general declension, some who are comparatively virtuous, perhaps professedly pious, yield insensibly to the influence of bad example. Habits are formed, and practices are allowed, which none would indulge in better days, but the openly vicious. Each says, of his own indulgence, "Is it not a little one?" But the aggregate guilt is great; and the aggregate demoralizing influence of such license in such persons is dreadful. It annihilates the influence of their good example; tempts the inexperienced to enter, and the hardened to go on, in the downward road, and renders all efforts to save them unavailing. If we would attempt, therefore, successfully, the work of reformation, we must make the experiment first upon ourselves. We must cease to do evil, and learn to do well, that, with pure hands and clear vision, we may be qualified to reclaim others. If our liberty, even in things lawful, should become a stumbling-block to the weak or the wicked, it may be no superfluous benevolence to forego gratifications innocent in themselves, that we may avoid the appearance of evil, and cut off occasion of reproach from all whom our exertions may provoke to desire occasion.

The next thing demanding attention is the religious education of the rising generation.

When the subject of reformation is proposed, multitudes turn their eyes to places of the greatest depravation, and to criminals of the most abandoned character; and because these strong-holds cannot be carried, and these sons of Belial reformed, they conclude that nothing can be done. But,

reformation is not the work of a day; and, if the strong-holds of vice cannot be stormed, there is still a silent, certain way of reformation. Immoral men do not live forever; and if good heed be taken that they draw no new recruits from our families, death will achieve for us a speedy victory. We may stand still, and see the salvation of God. Death will lay low the sons of Anak, and a generation of another spirit will occupy, without resistance, their fortified places.

From various causes, the ancient discipline of the family has been extensively neglected. Children have neither been governed nor instructed in religion as they were in the days of our fathers. The imported discovery, that human nature is too good to be made better by discipline, that children are enticed from the right way by religious instruction, and driven from it by the rod, and kept in thraldom by the conspiracy of priests and legislators, has united not a few in the noble experiment of emancipating the world by the help of an irreligious, ungoverned progeny. The indolent have rejoiced in the discovery that our fathers were fools and bigots, and have cheerfully let loose their children to help on the glorious work; while thousands of families, having heard from their teachers, or believing, in spite of them, that morality will suffice both for earth and heaven, and not doubting that morality will flourish without religion, have either not reared the family altar, or have put out the sacred fire, and laid aside together the rod and the Bible, as superfluous auxiliaries in the education of children. From the school, too, with pious regard for its sacred honors, the Bible, by some, has been withdrawn, lest, by a too familiar knowledge of its contents, children should learn to despise it; as if ignorance were the mother of devotion, and the efficacy of laws depended upon their not being understood. With similar benign wisdom, has not only

the rod, but government, and catechetical instruction, and a regard to the moral conduct of children, been exiled from the school. These sagacious counsels, emerging from beneath, were heedlessly adopted by many, as the wisdom from above, until their result began to disclose their different origin. For it came to pass, in many places, that the school, instead of a nursery of piety, became often a place of temptation, where children, forgetting the scanty instruction of the family, learned insubordination by indulgence, and impiety and immorality by the example of those who were permitted to sin with impunity. The consequence has been, that, on all sides, our ancient institutions are assailed, and our venerable habits and usages are passing away.

To retrieve these mischiefs of negligence and folly, a general effort must be made to restore our ancient system of education. There must be concert, new zeal, and special exertion; and let no man predict that the holy enterprise cannot succeed. Because we have listened to the siren song of vain philosophy, and floated listlessly down the stream, till the precipice appears, shall we despair to row back, when danger inspires courage, and calls aloud for a common effort?

Our fathers were not fools; they were as far from it as modern philosophers are from wisdom. Their fundamental maxim was, that man is desperately wicked, and cannot be qualified for good membership in society without the influence of moral restraint. With great diligence, therefore, they availed themselves of the laws and institutions of revelation, as embodying the most correct instruction, and the most powerful moral restraint. The word of God was daily read, and his worship celebrated, in the family and in the school, and children were trained up under the eye of Jehovah. In this great work, pastors and churches and magistrates coöperated.

And what moral restraint could not accomplish was secured by parental authority and the coercion of the law. The success of these efforts corresponded with the wisdom of the system adopted, and the fidelity with which it was reduced to practice. Our fathers established, and, for a great while, preserved, the most perfect state of society, probably, that has ever existed in this fallen world.

The same causes will still produce the same effects, and no other causes will produce them. New England can only retain her preëminence by upholding those institutions and habits which produced it. Divested of these, like Samson shorn of his locks, she will become as weak and as contemptible as any other land. But let the family and the school be organized and ordered according to the ancient pattern,— let parents, and schoolmasters, and pastors, and churches, and magistrates, do their duty,—and all will be well. The crown of glory will return, and the most fine gold will shine again in all its ancient lustre.

But we must here state more particularly the indispensable necessity of executing promptly the laws against immorality.

Much may be done in the way of prevention; but, in a free government, moral suasion and coercion must be united. If children be not religiously educated, and accustomed in early life to subordination, the laws will fail in the unequal contest of subduing tigers to their yoke. But if the influence of education and habit be not confirmed and guarded by the supervening influence of law, this salutary restraint will be swept away by the overpowering force of human depravity. To retrieve, therefore, our declension, it is indispensable, not only that new fidelity pervade the family, the school, and the church of God, but that the laws against immorality be

restored to their ancient vigor. Laws unexecuted are worse than nothing; mere phantoms, which excite increased audacity, when the vain fears subside which they have inspired. If the stream must have its course, it is better not to oppose obstructions which will only increase its fury, and extend the desolation when they are swept away.

But, in a season of great moral declension, how shall we raise from the dust neglected laws, and give to them life and vigor? The multiplication of new prohibitions and penalties will not avail; for the evil to be redressed is the non-execution of laws already competent, if executed, to our protection. Shall the government itself stand forth the watchful guardian of its own laws? Too often it may lack the inclination, and it will always be too much occupied by other concerns, to exercise the minute agency that is requisite.

Shall the work, then, be delegated to a subordinate magistracy? The neglect of official duty is the very evil for which we now seek a remedy. Shall individuals, then, volunteer their assistance? It is possible that they may sometimes experience a rebuke from the magistrate to whose aid they come. The workers of iniquity, also, will conspire constantly to hunt them down; while thousands of prudent well-wishers to the public morals will look on and see them sacrificed, pitying their rashness, and blessing themselves that they were wise enough to stand aloof from enterprises of so much danger.

Direct evils compel men to execute the law, while crimes full of deadly consequences are suffered to prevail with impunity. With relentless zeal, the sword pursues the fugitive thief and murderer, and no city of refuge affords them a sanctuary; while thousands devote themselves to the work of training up thieves and murderers, and in open day

cut the moral ties which bind them, and let them loose upon society. And yet the sword sleeps, and judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; while truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

To secure, then, the execution of the laws against immorality in a time of prevailing moral declension, an influence is needed distinct from that of the government, independent of popular suffrage, superior in potency to individual efforts, and competent to enlist and preserve the public opinion on the side of law and order.

This most desirable influence, as we have before observed, has been found in local voluntary associations of the wise and the good, to aid the civil magistrate in the execution of the laws. These associations are eminently adapted to answer their intended purpose. They awaken the public attention, and by the sermons, the reports, and the conversation they occasion, diffuse much moral instruction; they combine the wisdom and influence of all who desire to prevent crimes, and uphold peace and good order in society; they have great influence to form correctly the public opinion, and to render the violation of the law disgraceful, as well as dangerous; they teach the virtuous part of the community their strength, and accustom them to act, as well as to wish and to pray; they constitute a sort of disciplined moral militia, prepared to act upon every emergency, and repel every encroachment upon the liberties and morals of the State. By their numbers, they embolden the timid, and intimidate the enemy; and in every conflict, the responsibility, being divided among many, is not feared. By this auxiliary band the hands of the magistrate are strengthened, the laws are rescued from contempt, the land is purified, the anger of the Lord is turned away, and his blessing and protection restored.

If, beside these local associations, a more extended concert of wise and good men could be formed, to devise ways and means of suppressing vice and guarding the public morals,— to collect facts, and extend information, and, in a thousand nameless ways, to exert a salutary general influence, — it would seem to complete a system of exertion, which, we might hope, would retrieve what we have lost, and perpetuate forever civil and religious institutions. Associations of this general nature, for the promotion of the arts and sciences, have exerted a powerful influence, with great success ; and no reason, it is presumed, can be given, why the cause of morals may not be equally benefited by similar associations.

Finally : To counteract the prevalent declension, and raise the standard of public morals, it is peculiarly necessary to preserve indissoluble the connection between sin and shame.

A sense of shame will deter multitudes from the commission of crimes, whom conscience alone would not deter. Happily, in New England, immorality of every description has, from the beginning, been associated with disgrace. But the prevalence of wickedness in high places, and the growing frequency of crimes, have at length paralyzed the public sensibility, and lightened the tax of shame. Hence, criminals whom our fathers would have abhorred have been first "endured, then pitied, then embraced." This compromise with crimes, if persisted in, will undo us. Let the profligate be received with complacency into virtuous society, and enjoy without impediment the suffrage of the community, and the public conscience will be seared as with a hot iron ; the distinctions between right and wrong will disappear ; the wicked, open-mouthed, will walk on every side, and tread down with impunity the remnants of law and order. If we would reform the land, we must return, therefore, to the stern virtue

of our ancestors, and lay the whole tax of shame upon the dissolute and immoral.

Let this circumspection concerning moral character attend us in the selection of schoolmasters to instruct our children, of subordinate magistrates to manage the concerns of the town, and to execute the laws of the State, and in selecting the members of our State and National Legislatures, and we shall soon experience the good effects of our caution. But disregard this single consideration, and clothe with power irreligious and immoral men, and we cannot stop the prevalence of crimes. From the bad eminence to which we exalt the wicked, the flood of iniquity will roll down upon us, and the judgments of God will follow and sweep us away.

IV. We are to consider some of the motives which should animate the wise and the good to make immediate and vigorous exertion for the reformation of morals, and the preservation of our laws and institutions.

And, certainly, the importance of the interest in jeopardy demands our first and most serious regard.

If we consider only the temporal prosperity of the nation, the interest is the most important earthly interest that ever called forth the enterprise of man. No other portion of the human race ever commenced a national existence as we commenced ours. Our very beginning was civilized, learned, and pious. The sagacious eye of our ancestors looked far down the vale of time. Their benevolence laid foundations, and reared superstructures, for the accommodation of distant generations. Through peril, and tears, and blood, they procured the inheritance, which, with many prayers, they bequeathed unto us. It has descended in an unbroken line. It is now in our possession, impaired, indeed, by our folly, perverted and abused, but still the richest inheritance which the

mercy of God continues to the troubled earth. Nowhere beside, if you search the world over, will you find so much real liberty, so much equality, so much personal safety and temporal prosperity, so general an extension of useful knowledge, so much religious instruction, so much moral restraint, and so much divine mercy, to make these blessings the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. Shall we throw away this precious bequest? Shall we surrender our laws and liberties, our religion and morals, our social and domestic blessings, to the first invader? Shall we despair and die of fear, without an effort to avert our doom? What folly, what infatuation, what madness, to do so! With what indignation, could indignation be in heaven, would our fathers look down upon the deed! With what lamentation, could tears be in heaven, would they weep over it! With what loud voices, could they speak to us from heaven, would they beseech their degenerate children to put their trust in God, and contend earnestly for those precious institutions and laws for which they toiled and bled!

2. If we do not awake and engage vigorously in the work of reformation, it will soon be too late.

Though reformation is always practicable, if a people are disposed to reform, there is a point of degradation from which neither individuals nor nations *are disposed* to arise, and from which the Most High is seldom disposed to raise them. When irreligion and vice shall have contaminated the mass of the people,— when the majority, emancipated from civil and moral restraint, shall be disposed to set aside the laws and institutions and habits of their fathers,— then, indeed, it may be feared that our transgressions and our sins will be upon us, and that we shall pine away and die in them. The means of preservation, passing into other hands, will become the means

of destruction. Talents, and official influence, and the power of legislation, and all the resources of the State, may be perverted to demolish our institutions, laws, and usages, until every vestige of ancient wisdom and prosperity is gone.

To this state of things we are hastening; and, if no effort be made to stop our progress, the sun in his course is not more resistless than our doom. Our vices are digging the grave of our liberties, and preparing to entomb our glory. We may sleep, but the work goes on. We may despise admonition, but our destruction slumbereth not. Travelling, and worldly labor, and visiting, and amusement on the Sabbath, will neither produce nor preserve such a state of society as the conscientious observance of the Sabbath has helped to produce and preserve. The enormous consumption of ardent spirit in our land will produce neither bodies nor minds like those which were the offspring of temperance and virtue. The neglect of family government, and family prayer, and the religious education of children, will not produce such freemen as were formed by early habits of subordination, and the constant influence of the fear of God. The neglect of official duty in magistrates to execute the laws will not produce the same effects which were produced by the vigilance and fidelity of our fathers, to restrain and punish crimes.

Our institutions, civil and religious, have outlived that domestic discipline and official vigilance in magistrates to execute the laws which rendered obedience easy and habitual. The laws now are beginning to operate extensively upon necks unaccustomed to the yoke; and when they shall become irksome to the majority, their execution will become impracticable. To this situation we are already reduced, in some districts of the land. Drunkards reel through the streets, day after day, and year after year, with entire impunity.

Profane swearing is heard, and even by magistrates, as though they heard it not. Efforts to stop travelling on the Sabbath have in all places become feeble, and in many places they have wholly ceased. Informing officers complain that magistrates will not regard their informations, and that the public sentiment will not bear them out in executing the laws; and conscientious men, who dare not violate an oath, have begun to refuse the office. The only proper characters to sustain it, the only men who can retrieve our declining state, are driven into the back-ground, and their places filled with men of easy conscience, who will either do nothing, or by their own example help on the ruin. The public conscience is becoming callous by the frequency and impunity of crimes. The sin of violating the Sabbath is becoming in the public estimation a little sin, and the shame of it, nothing. The disgrace is divided among so many, that none regard it. The Sabbath is trodden down by a host of men, whom shame alone, in better days, would have deterred entirely from this sin. In the mean time, many who lament these evils are augmenting them, by predicting that all is lost, encouraging the enemy, and weakening the hands of the wise and good. But truly we do stand on the confines of destruction. The mass is changing. We are becoming another people. Our habits have held us, long after those moral causes which formed them have in a great degree ceased to operate. These habits, at length, are giving way. So many hands have so long been employed to pull away foundations, and so few to repair the breaches, that the building totters. So much enterprise has been displayed in removing obstructions from the current of human depravity, and so little to restore them, that the stream at length is beginning to run. It may be

stopped now, but it will soon become deep, and broad, and rapid, and irresistible.

The crisis, then, has come. By the people of this generation,— by ourselves, probably,— the amazing question is to be decided, whether the inheritance of our fathers shall be preserved, or thrown away; whether our Sabbaths shall be a delight, or a loathing; whether the taverns on that holy day shall be crowded with drunkards, or the sanctuary of God with humble worshippers; whether riot and profanity shall fill our streets, and poverty our dwellings, and convicts our jails, and violence our land, or whether industry, and temperance, and righteousness, shall be the stability of our times; whether mild laws shall receive the cheerful submission of freemen, or the iron rod of a tyrant compel the trembling homage of slaves. Be not deceived. Human nature in this nation is like human nature everywhere. All actual difference in our favor is adventitious, and the result of our laws, institutions, and habits. It is a *moral influence* which, with the blessing of God, has formed a state of society so eminently desirable. The same influence which has formed it is indispensable to its preservation. The rocks and hills of New England will remain till the last conflagration; but, let the Sabbath be profaned with impunity, the worship of God be abandoned, the government and religious instruction of children be neglected, and the streams of intemperance be permitted to flow, and her glory will depart. The wall of fire will no more surround her, and the munition of rocks will no longer be her defence. But,

3. If we do neglect our duty, and suffer our laws and institutions to go down, we give them up forever. It is easy to relax, easy to retreat, but impossible, when the abomination of desolation has once passed over, to rear again the

prostrate altars, and gather again the fragments, and build up the ruins of demolished institutions. Neither we nor our children shall ever see another New England, if this be destroyed. All is lost irretrievably, when the landmarks are once removed, and the bands which now hold us are once broken. Such institutions, and such a state of society, can be established only by such men as our fathers were, and in such circumstances as they were in. They could not have made a New England in Holland. They made the attempt, but failed. Nowhere could they have succeeded, but in a wilderness; where *they gave the precepts, and set the example, and made and executed the laws.* By vigilance, and prayer, and exertion, we may defend these institutions, retrieve much of what we have lost, and perpetuate a better state of society than can elsewhere be made by the art of man. But, let the enemy come in like a flood, and overturn, and overturn, and no place will be found for repentance, though it be sought carefully, with tears.

4. If we give up our laws and institutions, our guilt and misery will be very great.

We shall become slaves, and slaves to the worst of masters. The profane and the profligate, men of corrupt minds, and to every good work reprobate, will be exalted, to pollute us by their example, to distract us by their folly, and impoverish us by fraud and rapine. Let loose from wholesome restraint, and taught to sin by the example of the great, a scene most horrid to be conceived, but more dreadful to be experienced, will ensue. No people are more fitted to destruction, if they go to destruction, than we ourselves. All the daring enterprise of our countrymen, emancipated from moral restraint, will become the desperate daring of unrestrained sin. Should we break the bands of Christ, and cast his

cords from us, and begin the work of self-destruction, it will be urged on with a malignant enterprise which has no parallel in the annals of time, and be attended with miseries such as the sun has never looked upon.

The hand that overturns our laws and altars is the hand of death unbarring the gate of Pandemonium, and letting loose upon our land the crimes and the miseries of hell. Even if the Most High should stand aloof, and cast not a single ingredient into our cup of trembling, it would seem to be full of superlative woe. But he will not stand aloof. As we shall have begun an open controversy with him, he will contend openly with us; and never, since the earth stood, has it been so fearful a thing for nations to fall into the hands of the living God. The day of vengeance is in his heart; the day of judgment has come; the great earthquake which is to sink Babylon is shaking the nations, and the waves of the mighty commotion are dashing upon every shore. Is this, then, a time to remove foundations, when the earth itself is shaken? Is this a time to forfeit the protection of God, when the hearts of men are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth? Is this a time to run upon his neck, and the thick bosses of his buckler, when the nations are drinking blood, and fainting, and passing away in his wrath? Is this a time to throw away the shield of faith, when his arrows are drunk with the blood of the slain; to cut from the anchor of hope, when the clouds are collecting, and the sea and the waves are roaring, and thunders are uttering their voices, and lightnings blazing in the heavens, and the great hail is falling from heaven upon men, and every mountain, sea and island, is fleeing in dismay from the face of an incensed God?

5. The judgments of God which we feel, and those which

impend, call for immediate repentance and reformation. Our country has never seen such a day as this.* By our sins we are fitted to destruction. God has begun in earnest his work, his strange work, of national desolation. For many years, the ordinary gains of industry have, to a great extent, been cut off. The counsels of the nation have, to one part of it, been deemed infatuation, and by the other part, oracular wisdom; while the action and reäction of parties have shaken our institutions to their foundations, debased our morals, and awakened animosities which expose us to dismemberment and all the horrors of civil war. But for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. On our seaboard are the alarms and the plagues of war. On our frontiers is heard the trumpet of alarm, mingling with the war-whoop of the savage, and the cries and dying groans of murdered families. In the south, a volcano whose raging fires and murmuring thunders have long been suppressed is now, with loud admonition, threatening an eruption. In the midst of these calamities, the angel of God has received commission to unsheath his sword, and extend far and wide the work of death. The little child and the blooming youth, the husband and the wife, men of talents and usefulness, the ministers of the sanctuary and the members of the church of God, bow before the stroke, and sink to the grave. That dreadful tempest, the sound of which, till late, was heard only from afar, as it was borne across the Atlantic, has at length begun to beat upon us; and those mighty burnings, the smoke of which we have hitherto beheld from afar, have begun in our nation their devouring course. Nothing can avert the tempest, and nothing can extinguish our burning, but repent-

* 1812.

ance and reformation; for it is the tempest of the wrath of God, and the fire of his indignation.

6. Our advantages to achieve a reformation of morals are great, and will render our guilt and punishment proportionably aggravated, if we neglect to avail ourselves of them.

We are not yet undone. The harvest is not past; the summer is not ended. There is yet remaining much health and strength, in many parts of our land. This State especially is by its laws thoroughly furnished to every good work. Let our laws be executed, and we may live forever. Nor is their execution to be despaired of. In every town in the State, the majority of the population are decidedly opposed, it is believed, to those immoral practices which our laws condemn; and in most towns and societies it *is a small minority* who corrupt with impunity the public morals. Let the friends of virtue, then, express their opinions, and unite their influence, and the laws can be executed. Crimes will become disgraceful, and the non-execution of the laws more hazardous to popularity than their faithful execution. The friends of good morals and good government have it yet in their power to *create a public opinion* which nothing can resist.* The wicked are bold in appearance, but they are cowards at heart; their threats and boasting are loud, but they are "vox et praeterea nihil."† God is against them; their own consciences are against them; the laws are against them; and let only the public opinion be arrayed against them, and five shall chase a thousand, and a hundred shall put ten thousand to flight.

* The writer has lived to see that a new moral power must be applied by Sabbath-schools, revivals of religion, and Bible, tract, and missionary societies, before immoralities in a popular government can be suppressed by law.

† Mere noise, and nothing else.

It is not as if we were called upon to make new laws, and establish usages unknown before. We make no innovation. We embark in no novel experiment. We set up no new standard of morals. We encroach upon no man's liberty. We lord it over no man's conscience. We stand upon the defensive merely. We contend for our altars and our firesides. We rally around the standard which our fathers reared, and our motto is, "THE INHERITANCE WHICH THEY BEQUEATHED NO MAN SHALL TAKE FROM US." The executive, legislative, and judicial departments of the government are in the hands of men who, we doubt not, will lend to the work of reformation their example, their prayers, their weight of character, official influence, and their active coöperation. And will not the clergy and Christian churches of all denominations array themselves on the side of good morals and the laws? Will they not, like a band of brothers, and terrible to the wicked as an army with banners, contend earnestly for the precepts of the Gospel? If, with such means of self-preservation, we pine away and die in our sins, we shall deserve to die; and our death will be dreadful.

7. But were our advantages fewer than they are, the Lord will be on our side, and will bless us, if we repent and endeavor to do our duty.

He commands us to repent and reform; and what he commands his people to do, he will help them to accomplish, if they make the attempt. He has promised to help them. He always has given efficacy, more or less, to the faithful exertions of men to do good. At the present time, in a peculiar manner does he smile upon every essay to do good. Not a finger is lifted in vain in any righteous cause; the result of every enterprise surpasses expectation; the grain of mustard becomes a tree,—the little leaven leavens the lump.

The voice of Providence now is, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for this and that shall both prosper." The God in whose help we confide is also our fathers' God, who remembers mercy to the thousandth generation of them that fear him, and keep his commandments. Within the broad circumference of this covenant we stand, and neither few nor obscure are the indications of his mercy in the midst of wrath.

8. The work of reformation is already, it may be hoped, auspiciously begun.

Though in some things there is a fearful declension of morals, which, if not arrested, will inevitably destroy us, yet it ought to be gratefully acknowledged, that in some respects our moral state has, for a considerable period, been growing better. The progress of civilization and religion has softened the manners of the people, and banished, to a great extent, that violence of passion which ended in broils and lawsuits. Those indecencies, also, which too often polluted the intercourse of the sexes, and warred upon the best interests of society, have, to a great extent, given place to habits of refinement and virtue. Though at this time there be heresies, that they which are approved may be manifest, there has never been in this State — perhaps never in the nation — a more extensive prevalence of evangelical doctrine. Great efforts have been made, also, and with signal success, to raise up a learned and pious ministry for the churches, from which, in time, a great reforming influence may be expected; for the morals of a nation will ever hold a close alliance with the talents and learning, the piety and orthodoxy, of its clergy. The number of pious persons has, in the course of fifteen years, been greatly increased, and has been attended with a more than correspondent increase of prayer. Those local

weekly associations for prayer which are now spread over our land are, most of them, of comparatively recent origin.

In perfect accordance with this increased spirit of prayer, has been the effusion of the Holy Spirit, in the revival of religion. These revivals have been numerous, great, and glorious; and, blessed be God, they still prevail. Their reforming influence has been salutary beyond expression. Wherever they have existed, they have raised up the foundations of many generations. They have done more than all other causes to arrest our general decline, and are this moment turning back the captivity of our land. The churches, under their renovating influence, are beginning to maintain a more efficient discipline, and to superintend with more fidelity the religious education of their baptized children. The principles of infidel philosophy with respect to civil government, and the government and religious education of children, have, it is hoped, had their day, and are retiring to their own place, succeeded, happily, by the maxims of revelation and common sense.

The missionary spirit which is beginning to pervade our land promises, also, an auspicious reforming influence. It teaches us to appreciate more justly our own religious privileges, and calls off the hearts of thousands from political and sectarian bickerings, to unite them in one glorious enterprise of love. Who, but the Lord our God, has created that extensive and simultaneous predisposition in the public mind to favor a work of reformation? Who, in this day of clouds and tempest, has opened the eyes of the people to recognize their dependence upon God, and his avenging hand, in the judgments which they feel, and turned their hearts to seek him, to an unusual extent, by fasting, and humiliation, and prayer? Who, indeed, has poured out upon our land a spirit of reform-

ation as *real*, if not yet as universal, as the spirit of missions? The fact is manifest from the zeal of individuals, the reviving fidelity of magistrates in various places, the addresses of ecclesiastical bodies, and the formation of general and local associations to suppress crimes, and support the laws and institutions of our land.*

The Most High, then, has begun to help us. While his judgments are abroad, the nation is beginning to learn righteousness. These favorable circumstances do by no means supersede the necessity of special exertion; but they are joyful pledges that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. They are his providential voice, announcing that he is waiting to be gracious; and that, if we "hearken to him, he will soon subdue our enemies, and turn his hand against our adversaries; that the haters of the Lord shall submit them-

* A society was formed in Boston, on the 5th of February, 1813, entitled "The Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance." The object of the society is stated to be, "to discountenance and suppress the too frequent use of ardent spirits, and its kindred vices, profaneness, and gaming; and to encourage and promote temperance, and general morality. With a view to this object, the society will recommend the institution of auxiliary societies in different parts of the commonwealth; and hold correspondence with other societies which may be instituted for the same general object.

"Besides the usual officers of a society, there is a board of counsel, consisting of eight persons, which is to act as the executive of the society, to make communications to the auxiliary societies, and to receive communications from them; to collect, combine, and digest facts, and general information, relating to the purposes of the society; to devise ways and means for the furtherance of these purposes; to apply the society's funds according to direction; and, at each annual meeting, to report to the society their doings, a digest of the facts and general information which they may have collected, and such measures as they may judge suitable for the society to adopt and pursue. They shall hold stated quarterly meetings." —*Panoplist for February*, 1813, pp. 418, 419, 420.

selves unto him, but that our time shall endure forever." Therefore,

9. If we endure a little longer, the resources of the millennial day will come to our aid.

Many are the prophetic signs which declare the rapid approach of that day. Babylon the great is fallen. The false prophet is hastening to perdition. That wicked one hath appeared, whom the Lord will destroy by the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming. The day of his vengeance is wasting the earth. The last vial of the wrath of God is running. The angel having the everlasting Gospel to preach to men has begun his flight; and, with trumpet sounding long, and waxing loud, is calling to the nations to look unto Jesus and be saved. Soon will the responsive song be heard from every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

On the confines of such a day, shall we despair? While its blessed light is beginning to shine, shall we give up our laws and institutions, and sink down to the darkness and torments of the bottomless pit?

10. But considerations before which the kingdoms of this world fade and are forgotten call us to instant exertion in the work of reformation.

Every one of us must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Every one of us, as a friend or an enemy, shall live under his government forever. We shall drink of the river of pleasure, or of the cup of trembling. We shall sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, or lift up our cries with the smoke of our torment. The institutions in danger are the institutions of heaven, provided to aid us in fleeing from the

wrath to come. The laws to be preserved are laws which have lent their congenial influence to the immortal work of saving sinners. The welfare of millions, through eternity, depends, under God, upon their preservation.

Ye parents,— which of your children can you give up to the miseries of a profligate life, and the pangs of an impenitent death? Which, undone by your example, or negligence and folly, are you prepared to meet on the left hand of your Judge? Which, if by a miracle of mercy you should ascend to heaven, can you leave behind, to go away into everlasting punishment? Call around you the dear children whom God has given you, and look them o'er and o'er, and, if among them all you cannot find a victim to sacrifice, awake, and with all diligence uphold those institutions which the good shepherd has provided to protect and save them.

My fathers and brethren, who minister at the altar,— the time is short. We must soon meet our people at the bar of God. Should we meet any of them undone by our example, or sloth, or unbelief, dreadful will be the interview! Shall we not lift up our voice as a trumpet, and do quickly, and with all our might, what our hands find to do?

Ye magistrates of a Christian land, ye ministers of God for good,— the people of this land, alarmed by the prevalence of crimes and by the judgments of God, look up to you for protection. By the glories and terrors of the judgment-day, by the joys of heaven and the miseries of hell, they beseech you, as the ministers of God, to save them and their children from the dangers of this untoward generation.

Ye men of wealth and influence,— will ye not help in this great attempt to reform and save our land? Are not these distinctions talents, for the employment of which you must give an account to God? and can you employ them better

than to consecrate them to the service of your generation by the will of God?

Let me entreat those unhappy men who haste to be rich by unlawful means, who thrive by the vices and ruin of their fellow-men, to consider their end. How dreadful to you will be the day of death! How intolerable the day of judgment! How many broken-hearted widows, and fatherless children, will then lift up their voices, to testify against you. How many of the lost spirits will ascend from the world of woe, to cry out against you, as the wretches who ministered to their lusts, and fitted them for destruction. In vain will you plead that, if you had not done the murderous deed, other men would have done it; or that, if you had not destroyed them, they had still destroyed themselves. If other men had done the deed, they, and not you, would answer for it; if they had destroyed themselves without your agency, their blood would be upon their own heads. But, as you contributed voluntarily to their destruction, you will be holden as partakers in their sin, and their blood will be required at your hands. Why, then, will you traffic in the souls and bodies of men, and barter away your souls for the gains of a momentary life?

To conclude. Let me entreat the unhappy men who are the special objects of legal restraint to cease from their evil ways, and, by voluntary reformation, supersede the necessity of coercion and punishment. Why will you die? What fearful thing is there in heaven, which makes you flee from that world? What fascinating object in hell, that excites such frenzied exertion to burst every band, and overleap every mound, and force your way downward to the chambers of death? Stop, I beseech you, and repent, and Jesus Christ shall blot out your sins, and remember your transgressions no more. Stop, and the host who follow your steps shall

turn, and take hold on the path of life. Stop, and the wide waste of sin shall cease, and the song of angels shall be heard again: "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will to men." Stop, and instead of wailing with the lost, you shall join the multitudes which no man can number, in the ascription of blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.

SERMON IV.

THE BUILDING OF WASTE PLACES.

"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." ISAIAH 61 : 4.

THE text predicts the civil and religious order which should succeed the restoration of the tribes from Babylon. During that long exile, many fields lay untilled, and many cities without inhabitant,— their walls broken down. The temple and the synagogues of the nation lay, also, in ruins. But "they shall build," saith the prophet, "the old wastes." The fields shall be tilled, the cities inhabited, the temple rebuilt, and the worship of God restored.

The prediction has unquestionably a reference also to the latter day, and announces that great spiritual change which awaits the nations made desolate by sin. In all lands the wastes shall be builded,— the wastes of Paganism, the wastes of Mahometanism, the wastes of Popery, the wastes of atheism and heresy. The accomplishment of this universal restoration will include the raising up of decayed churches, as well as the planting of new ones; and will be accomplished, doubtless, by the charities and benevolent exertions of those religious communities which are blessed with the institutions of the Gospel.

The waste places of Connecticut, and the duty of building

them, will be the subject of consideration in this discourse.* That there are desolations in this State, will not be questioned by any minutely acquainted with our circumstances. Not a few societies have ceased to hear those doctrines of the Gospel, by the instrumentality of which the Spirit of God awakens, converts, and sanctifies men. A number of churches have become feeble, and, by hard struggling, prolong from year to year the enjoyment of divine institutions; while some have long since fallen, and are now lying in utter desolation.

The building of these wastes will include the propagation of the truth, the communication of strength to the feeble, and the restoration of fallen societies to the order of the Gospel.

In the illustration of the subject, it is proposed to consider,

I. The causes of these desolations.

II. The means of restoring them.

III. The motives to immediate exertion for that purpose.

I. The immediate causes are, evidently, the difference of religious sentiment and worship which prevails, connected with a criminal indifference to the institutions of the Gospel.

There is not, in the State, a town or parish unable to support the Gospel constantly, and with ease, provided all the families in the limits of each were of one heart and of one way to serve the Lord. But the property, in many societies, is divided between three or four different denominations, beside a part which the love of money and indifference to the Gospel wholly withdraw from the support of divine institutions. The consequence is, the decline, and, in some cases, the entire subversion, of that religious order which our fathers established.

* The remarks applied to this State are, with slight modification, applicable to New England generally; but it is thought best to preserve the local references.

But by what causes has this change in the religious opinions and habits of the people been accomplished? The fathers of Connecticut came here on purpose to establish and perpetuate that religious order which is still the prevailing order in the State. They were united in their views of doctrine and discipline, were strongly attached to the religious order they had established, and, with singular wisdom, provided for its perpetuity. Believing godliness to be profitable to the life that now is, and ignorance and irreligion to be crimes against the State, they required by law every society to support the Gospel, and every family to contribute its proportion, and to attend statedly upon its ministrations. In the formation of a new settlement, even if it consisted of not more than twenty families, a minister, a meeting-house, and a school-house, were deemed as indispensable as their own dwellings. Thus organized, for more than a century, Zion was a city compactly builded; and friends and foes might, with different emotions, "go round about her, and tell her towers, and mark her bulwarks, and consider her palaces." By what causes, then, have these changes been accomplished? The most efficacious are, doubtless, remote; have operated silently and slowly, and produced their results at periods so distant as almost to elude observation.

In bringing them into view, no unkind feelings are indulged towards Christians of other denominations, and nothing disrespectful or injurious is intended; the importance of the subject requires the investigation to be conducted with the verity of the historian, and the fidelity of the surgeon, who wounds only to heal.

A remote cause of our present wastes is to be found in a very great declension of vital piety in the churches, which took place many years ago. For more than one hundred

years, the pastors and churches of Connecticut were strictly evangelical; but, at length, different views concerning doctrine began to prevail. This was occasioned by an alarming suspension, for many years, of the special influence of the Spirit, and by the expedients of human wisdom to replenish the churches without the agency of God. One effect of this decline was, the introduction into the ministry of men who probably had never experienced the power of divine grace on their hearts, and who, of course, would be prepared by native feeling to oppose the doctrines of the Gospel. From such, nothing better could be expected than a cold, formal, unfaithful, unproductive ministry, and a gradual approximation to another Gospel. Those precious truths which are the power of God to salvation were first omitted, and at length openly opposed. The consequence was, that "the love of many waxed cold, and the ways of Zion mourned, because few came to her solemn feasts." Alarmed at the declining numbers of the church, and the corresponding increase of the unbaptized, our fathers, with pious intent, doubtless, but with a most unwarrantable distrust of God and dependence on human wisdom, introduced what has since been denominated the *half-way covenant*. According to the provisions of this anomaly in religion, persons of a regular deportment, though destitute of piety, might be considered as church-members, and offer their children in baptism, without coming to the sacramental supper; for which piety was still deemed indispensable. The effect was, that *owning the covenant*, as it was called, became a common, thoughtless ceremony; and baptism was extended to all who had either sufficient regard to fashion or to self-righteous doings to ask it for themselves or for their children. As to the promises of educating children in the fear of the Lord, and submitting

to the discipline of the church, on the one hand, or of watchful care on the other, they were alike disregarded, both by those who exacted and by those who made them. Others, alarmed by the same declension of numbers in the visible church, and leaning equally to their own understanding to provide a remedy, discovered, as they imagined, that grace is not necessary to the participation of either ordinance; that there is but one covenant, the condition of which might be *moral sincerity;* and that the sacrament of the supper, like the preaching of the Gospel, might be numbered among the means of grace for the conversion of the soul. With these views, the doors of the church were thrown open, and all the congregation who *could* be were persuaded to come in.

These innovations in church order, though resisted by many, and not introduced without considerable agitation, became at length almost universal throughout New England. The consequences were what might be expected, where sinners are countenanced in drawing near to God with their mouths, while their heart is removed far from him, and their fear towards him is taught by the precepts of men: they were, the annihilation of church discipline, and the prevalence of Arminian feelings and opinions, mingled with the disjointed remains of evangelical doctrine. Without an absolute rejection of the doctrines of grace, the preaching, and the feeling, and the practice, to a great extent, were, "*Do and live.*" Good works and the dilatory use of means occupied the fore-ground, while the Holy Spirit waited at humble distance, to accomplish the little which remained to be done as the reward or promised consequence of antecedent well-doing. So alarming had this declension of vital piety become in the days of Cotton Mather, as to occasion the

memorable prediction, that, in forty years, should it progress as it had done, convulsions would ensue, in which churches would be gathered out of churches ; — a prediction afterwards signally verified. For, in the year 1740, it pleased the God of our fathers to visit the churches of New England by the special influence of the Holy Spirit. But this joyful event, which commenced the restoration of evangelical doctrine and discipline, and planted the seeds of those revivals which still prevail, was, through the weakness of some and the wickedness of many, made the occasion of evils which are felt to this day. I allude to the opposition which was made to this work of God by the unconverted, the formal and the timid ; the prejudices it excited against a learned ministry and the Congregational order; the intemperate zeal it enkindled; the separations it occasioned, which rent many churches, and laid the foundation for that diversity of religious opinion and worship which has so unhappily enfeebled some churches, and brought others to desolation.

Until these separations, which a proper zeal and prudence on the part of the pastors might have easily prevented, the ancient external order of the churches remained, with but little variation or prejudice against it. The inhabitants of the same town or parish were of one denomination, and worshipped together in the sanctuary which their fathers had built. But now, driven from their ordinary course by a repulsion so violent, the separatist became, for a season, the subject of an enthusiasm which defied restraint and despised order. In these new societies awoke that spirit of proselytism which has outlived them, and those deep-rooted prejudices against a learned ministry, and those revilings of a hireling priesthood and the standing order, and those complaints of persecution, which have not wholly ceased to this day. Built up, how-

ever, by the zeal of an emergency, and destined to ultimate decay, they were still prevented, by a strong aversion, from coalescing with the regular churches, and, of course, laid the foundation, and furnished the materials, to build up the several denominations which now prevail in the State.

A beginning having once been made,—a small society, of whatever name, being once established,—various causes would naturally contribute to perpetuate and enlarge it. All who were fond of novelty, and given to change, could now make experiment how it would seem to worship God in some new way; and every one who, by any means, became dissatisfied with his minister, or the deacon, or the church, or any member of the society, could take a speedy revenge, by going to another denomination. The covetous, constrained by law to pay, against their inclination, for the support of the Gospel, soon learned to plead a tender conscience, in order to save their money, and joined themselves to the denomination which could help them on to heaven at the least expense.

As another cause of debility and desolation, may be noted the defections occasioned by the restoration of evangelical doctrine and discipline. The revivals of 1740 were the commencement of a reformation in this State, which has brought the churches back to the doctrines and discipline of our fathers. A change so great, however, and so contrary to human depravity, fortified as it was by custom, was not to be accomplished without resistance. Accustomed to the immunities of the half-way covenant, and pleased with this self-righteous, dilatory method of preparation for heaven, the unconverted were alarmed at the demands of immediate repentance, and offended at the distinction which now began to be made between the righteous and the wicked. It was not till after nearly half a century of controversy, in the

progress of which many churches were shaken, and many societies enfeebled, that the point became established, that a credible profession of religion is indispensable to church membership, and that the seals of the covenant are to be applied to none but the members of the visible church and their children.

Another cause of desolation, more limited in its operation, but not less disastrous in its effects where it has operated, has been, the timid policy of forbearing to preach plainly those doctrines which offend, and of shrinking from a vigilant, efficient discipline in the church, lest these things should interrupt the peace and endanger the stability of the congregation. It has been called prudence; but experience has shown it to be a prudence which, in the beginning, surrenders at discretion to the enemy, to keep him quiet; which substitutes policy for duty, and relies on temporizing expedients, instead of the protection and blessing of God, in the fearless performance of duty. The uniform effect has been, weak hands and a faint heart to the minister; the loss of personal usefulness, the suspension of divine influence, the decline of vital piety, immorality and error in the church, and impiety and licentiousness without; until, at the death or dismission of the pastor, the church has become almost extinct, and the congregation is conducted to the verge of ruin.

A later cause of decline and desolation has been the insidious influence of infidel philosophy. The mystery of iniquity had, in Europe, been operating for a long time. The unclean spirits had commenced their mission to the kings of the earth, to gather them together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. But when that mighty convulsion took place which a second time burst open the bottomless pit, and spread darkness and dismay over Europe, every gale brought

to our shores contagion and death. Thousands, at once, breathed the tainted air, and felt the fever kindle in the brain. A paroxysm of moral madness and terrific innovation ensued. In the frenzy of perverted vision, every foe appeared a friend, and every friend a foe. No maxims were deemed too wise to be abandoned, none too horrid to be adopted; no foundations too deep-laid to be torn up, and no superstructure too venerable to be torn down, that another, such as, in Europe, they were rearing with bones and blood, might be built. As the institutions of Connecticut, however, were built upon a rock, and were defended by thousands not yet bereft of common sense and moral principle, a few experiments evinced that such foundations could be shaken only by the slow progress of undermining. It remained, therefore, to extend the mania till it should subtract from their defence and add to the host of assailants a number sufficient to accomplish the work. With great feigned reverence, therefore, were the Bible and catechetical instruction exiled from the school. The polluted page of infidelity everywhere met the eye, while its sneers and blasphemies assailed the ear. The specious argument of leaving children uninstructed, that they might at a riper age choose their own religion without bias, gave leisure for depravity to mature its alienating prejudices, for lies to extend their influence, and for vicious habits to establish their unresisted dominion. The result was, a brood of infidels, and heretics, and profligates; a generation prepared to be carried about, as they have been, by every wind of doctrine, and to assail, as they have done, our most sacred institutions.

But the time at length arrived when all the preceding causes were enlisted as auxiliaries merely, and invested with double potency by political violence and alienation.

The origin and progress of these collisions of party need not be traced; nor is it the object of this discourse to weigh the contending parties in the scales of justice, to ascertain their relative guilt, and measure out a retribution,— a work which belongs to God and the judgment of the great day. But the effects of this unhappy controversy have been such upon this once peaceful State, that the combatants on both sides have occasion to sit down and weep together over the desolations which the conflict has occasioned: for it has been keen and dreadful, and, like the varying conflict of battle, has marred and trodden down whatever has stood within the range of its commotion. On every field over which it swept, abiding traces are left of its desolating career,— families divided, neighbors and friends embittered, ministers and people alienated, churches divided, and the numbers of seceding denominations multiplied, with all those bitter feelings which contention and wounds are calculated to inspire. At the present moment, there is scarcely an ecclesiastical society in the State which has not experienced a diminution of its numbers, or a seceding denomination which has not been established or augmented by these political contentions.

To the preceding causes must be added, if we speak the whole truth, the direct enterprise of religious denominations to augment their numbers.

Feeling as all minorities ever have felt, and impatient to exchange the inconveniences of weakness for the advantages attached to numbers, and confident, as all denominations are, of being exactly right, a deceitful heart might easily mistake the combined impulse of proselyting zeal and restless ambition for unmingled zeal for the Lord of hosts; and might verily think that many things ought to be done to pull down

the *standing order;* which things, also, as the circumstances of the times have favored, have been done.

The operation of all these causes has been greatly facilitated by the change made in the law for the support of the Gospel, in order to accommodate it to the changes in religious opinion which had gradually taken place in the State. It was the fundamental maxim of the fathers of this State, that the preaching of the Gospel is, in a civil point of view, a great blessing to the community, for the support of which all should contribute, according to their several ability. This law, while the inhabitants of the State were all of one religious creed, was entirely efficacious, and secured to the people of the State at least four times the amount of religious instruction which has ever been known to be the result of mere voluntary associations for the support of the Gospel.*

* It has been said that the Gospel will support itself, and that civil laws have nothing to do with the support of the Gospel. If it be meant that the Gospel will exist in the world though we should neglect to support it in Connecticut, it is true; but, if the meaning be, that God will continue to us a faithful ministry and bestow his blessing upon it, though we should withhold the means for its competent support, it is not true. The certain continuance of the Gospel in the world no more insures its continuance where the proper means are neglected, than the certain continuance of seed time and harvest in the world proves that the people of Connecticut may neglect to plough and sow, and still expect an abundant harvest.

And with respect to the manner in which religious instruction shall be provided, no plan has ever yet been adopted so effectual as legislative provisions, which shut out individual discretion, and require every man to pay for the support of the Gospel according to his property. The experiment has been fairly made, on our right hand and on our left, of what may be expected from voluntary associations and contributions for the support of divine institutions; and the result is, that at least four times more religious instruction is secured by legal provision, than has ever been provided to any considerable extent by voluntary discretion. Even in this

But, at length, the multiplication of other denominations demanded such a modification of the law as should permit

State, since the evasion of the law has become practicable and common, the amount of religious instruction provided by themselves by that portion of our population who have reserved to their own discretion what they will give, has dwindled in nearly the same proportion. One Sabbath in three is probably about the medium amount of religious instruction which they think fit to provide for themselves or their families; or, to use their own language, which the Gospel "provides for itself." This, too, is falling off, in the face of a general contrary example, and in spite of antecedent education and habit. What, then, is to be expected from the next generation, and what is to be the destiny of this State and its institutions, should an increasing portion of our population grow up in such comparative ignorance? If any portion of the instruction which God has provided for men is important, the whole is proportionably more important. If one Sabbath in three is important, each of the other two is equally important; if a total loss of Sabbaths would be a calamity, the loss of two out of three is a calamity of equal relative amount; if two Sabbaths' instruction lost is of no consequence, the one Sabbath enjoyed is of no consequence, and the Sabbath itself is good for nothing. So far as religious instruction on the Sabbath is the cause of religious knowledge and of moral habits, nothing can be anticipated but the increase of ignorance, and irreligion, and immorality, in proportion to the decline of the means of instruction and restraint. Nor is this all; the families who have worship to attend only one Sabbath in three will not attend that Sabbath as punctually as those who attend statedly upon weekly instruction. Two Sabbaths of indolence, and vagrancy of thought and conduct, will more than dissipate the instruction and efface the impression of the third. No community and no family, by observing only one Sabbath in three, can hold their own against the current of depravity and the power of temptation.

If these views are correct, it is deplorable to witness with what thoughtlessness and disregard of consequences men will cut themselves off, and cut off their families, and, by consequence, successive generations of posterity, from at least two-thirds the amount of that religious instruction and restraint which God has provided to bless them in time, and to qualify them for heaven. All this would be lamentable, if the remaining portion of instruction was as good in matter and manner as the whole which they have abandoned. But, in the feverish haste of revenge, or the narrowness

every man to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience, and compel him to pay only for the support of the Gospel in his own denomination. The practical effect has been to liberate all conscientious dissenters from supporting a worship which they did not approve,— which the law intended; and to liberate a much greater number, without conscience, from paying for the support of the Gospel anywhere, and progressively to diminish the amount of religious instruction and moral influence in the State,—a thing which the law did not intend. While it accommodates the conscientious feelings of ten, it accommodates the angry, revengeful, avaricious, and irreligious feelings of fifty; and threatens, by a silent, constant operation, to undermine the deep-laid foundations of our civil and religious order.

The vital principle of our system, that every man shall pay according to his property for the support of religious instruction, as a public civil benefit, and for the preservation of morals and good order in the State, is gone. Every man who chooses to do it withdraws, by a little management, his whole tax from the support of the Gospel; and the result is lamentably manifest, in the multiplication of feeble societies and

of avaricious savings, how little is thought of the importance of truth! O! 't is enough to make angels weep, to see whole families of precious, immortal children, unconscious of their doom, cut off at once, by this rash act of a father, from the hearing of the truth, to famish by hearing nothing, or to be poisoned by hearing error. O! how will such rash deeds appear in the day of judgment, when the wretched father, undone by his folly, shall find himself surrounded by his family, ruined by his anger, or destroyed by his parsimony! How must their agony torture him, and their cries harrow up his soul! What imprecations, from a long line of descendants, will assail his ears, and what anguish wring his heart, while he goes away with them into everlasting punishment, "where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched!"

waste places. It has taught also the malicious and the irreligious the art of breaking down societies, and multiplying, by design, our desolations.

The last cause which I shall mention is the remedy which has too often been applied to rescue declining congregations, and raise waste places. The common policy has been, to settle a minister upon an incompetent salary, with the expectation that he will support himself, in part, by his own exertions; and the consequence, which might have been anticipated, has usually been, that the habit of worldly care, which necessity began, becomes a habit of worldliness which, in some cases, renders the ministry a secondary consideration. Gain is substituted for godliness, and preaching the Gospel becomes a convenient auxiliary in the system of accumulating money. The man has become a thriving farmer, an able schoolmaster, a sagacious speculator, but has long since ceased to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. His thoughts, his heart, his time, are devoted to secular pursuits, while, with his lips only, he deals out, one day in seven, cold commendations of that religion whose interests he betrays. But the more common effect is, that his ministry embarrasses his worldly enterprise, and his worldly enterprise his ministry, so much, that both become comparatively unfruitful. He cannot pursue his worldly business to the best advantage, because he is a minister; and he cannot pursue the work of the ministry to advantage, because he is a farmer. The combined result is, a bare support, with a double tax of care; few books, and no leisure to read them; little time for study, and that of little value, from the impossibility of putting in requisition, at a moment's warning, the resources of a mind vexed with ceaseless perplexities, and long since a stranger to habits of study. He laments his situation, longs to devote himself to his work,

hopes for better days, while every year brings new conviction that they will never come. In this unequal struggle, his days of improvement pass away; his mind is undisciplined, his heart cold and formal, his sermons unpopular abroad, and irksome at home. He neglects to visit his people, for he has no time; he neglects meetings for prayer, and the main-spring being removed, all the movements which are the life of religion stop. In proportion, also, as he does less for his people, he loves them less, and their affection for him declines in the same degree; and now sectarians, with flaming zeal, break in upon his charge, and preach, and pray, and visit, and do just those things to alienate his people which ought to have been done to attach them to himself, and to one another. Alarmed at this furious onset, he hurls from the pulpit unavailing invectives against the foe, and makes some feeble exertions to prevent a defection, which hard names will only extend. But it is all too late; the kind attention, by which he might once have bound his people to himself forever, has been exhibited by a stranger, who has stolen away their hearts by an irretrievable delusion. And, now, his little salary presses hard upon the diminished number of his people, is poorly paid, and operates as a constant temptation to increased defection. Alarmed at their danger, his people complain that he does not visit them, and take pains to hold the congregation together; and he, in return, complains that they have not enabled him to do it, by providing for him a competent support, or even by the punctual payment of the pittance stipulated. Complaint begets complaint, and crimination begets crimination, until, at length, the crisis arrives; his people, weakened by defections, can no longer raise his little salary; and he, by the most strenuous exertions, cannot do without it. Of course, a council is called, and the pastoral relation is dissolved. The

pastor, in the decline of life, with a large family, goes an exile to the wilderness, or settles in some other declining church, to repeat the same experiment, and, unless death prevents, to witness the same result. The society, which, by a trifling additional effort, might have commanded the whole time of their pastor, and become yearly stronger, have, by their injudicious parsimony, frittered away their strength, and brought themselves to desolation: have dug their own grave, and lie down in it to awake no more. One-half the time of a minister who devotes his whole time to his appropriate work would be more efficacious, to build up a declining society, than all the scraps of time which any man, compelled to support himself in part, can possibly rescue from the toils and cares of worldly avocations. The success of a minister depends much, under God, upon the state of his mind and his heart; a mind disciplined by study, and a heart warmed by action in his blessed work; a state of mind and heart which cannot be preserved amid the distractions of care, and the din of business, and which cannot be commanded for immediate use, the moment he sits down in his study, or steps from the world into his pulpit.

It would be far better, where it can be done, that two feeble societies should unite in the competent support of one man,—commanding, between them, the whole time and all the talents of their pastor,—than to prolong, in both, a ministry without its appropriate duties and blessings, until both are brought to desolation.

We are to consider,

II. The means by which the wastes in this State may be built.

And here suffer me to suggest, as a measure of great utility, not to the desolate merely, but to all the churches, the

occasional itineration of the stated pastors within the limits of each association, and by exchanges into other associations, and in different parts of the State. A ministry entirely migratory, though it possess some advantages, is defective; and so also is a ministry wholly stationary. A system which should retain all the benefits of stability, and at the same time avail itself of the peculiar advantages of itinerancy, would approach, it is believed, nearest to perfection. But such a system might, with the utmost ease, be established in this State. Partial experiments have been made already, and always with singularly happy effects. A religious enterprise of this kind breaks in upon the lethargy which is apt to invade the mind, too long conversant with the same place, objects, and duties. It creates a more minute and yet extended knowledge of the state of the churches, and a stronger interest in their welfare; while it awakens to new zeal and enterprise, among their own people, both those who itinerate and those who are cheered by their coming.*

* Itinerations of the above description have been repeatedly practised in both the associations of Litchfield county, and in every instance have been attended by the happiest effects. The revivals which prevailed in this county, from the year 1798 to 1800, were, in many instances, begun, and in all happily promoted, by the blessing of God upon such itinerations. In the State of New Jersey, also, two seasons of extensive revivals were begun by the blessing of God upon a similar system of special enterprise. Two ministers have, in all cases, been united in the same tour; and latterly, the churches have had previous notice of the commencement and continuance of the tour, and have devoted a portion of time each evening, between the hours of seven and eight, to a concert of *secret prayer* to God, for his blessing upon the enterprise; and not unfrequently, while they have been yet speaking, the answer has been granted. In all cases the churches have been refreshed and animated by such visits, and a more extensive attention produced than would have been commanded by ordinary lectures.

For the special benefit of destitute, feeble congregations, a concert might be formed by ministers in the vicinity, which should extend to them a course of parochial visits once or twice a year; to which might be added a stated lecture, upheld by concert, once a month, and, in many cases, every week. Four ministers, by spending each one week in a vacant congregation, might catechize all the schools, and visit all the families, at least once a year; and, by preaching only three lectures each, might convene the people twelve times a year, to be instructed and cheered by the preaching of the Gospel. How great would be the amount of instruction thus communicated, and of religious and moral influence thus exerted! What confidence would it inspire in the pastors of the churches; what affection would it create; what gratitude awaken; what opportunities to advise, and what influence would it give to ministers, to preserve and build up decayed congregations! How benign, especially upon the rising generation, would be such gratuitous pastoral attentions! How much impiety and immorality might be thus prevented! What new views communicated, what new desires awakened, what new hopes excited, what new habits formed! To these instructions of the week might be added stated supplies, for some time, on the Sabbath, by the consent of surrounding churches. Is there a church in the State, blessed with a stated ministry, which would not rejoice to impart the bread of two Sabbaths to a destitute sister church; or a minister who would not travel, once or twice a year, ten or twenty miles, to supply a vacancy? This measure alone would sensibly cheer the wastes of Zion, without the least pecuniary sacrifice, or any sacrifice which would not more than repay itself in the good done, and the satisfaction experienced in doing it.

Another means of restoration may be found in the appoint-

ment of evangelists, whose whole time shall be devoted to the preaching of the Gospel within the limits of feeble and destitute congregations. Their access to these wastes, and their continuance in them, may be regulated by their own discretion; but, unquestionably, the time of several evangelists might be as profitably employed in this State as in any region to which missionaries are sent. How much might they do to cheer the pious, to encourage the desponding, to remove misconceptions, to eradicate prejudices, to promote revivals and the reformation of morals, and thus to prepare the way for the established order of the Gospel! The impulse thus given might suffice, in many cases, to produce a speedy, spontaneous resurrection; for of many a sister church we trust it may be said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth."

To the labors of evangelists must probably be added, in some cases, a permanent stated supply, until the work of restoration be consummated. It is a long-continued action of inauspicious causes that has occasioned desolations in certain cases, and nothing but a stated, counteracting, salutary influence, can build them up.

As to the means of supporting evangelists, and stated supplies, a portion of the expense, and probably a portion annually increasing, would be cheerfully borne by the people who are blessed with these ministrations. For another item: let each association in the State open a treasury for the purpose, and each church in the association cast into it one sacramental contribution a year, enlarged as it would readily be for that purpose, and the amount would employ constantly several evangelists, to cheer the wastes, and cause the heart of the desolate to sing. This single measure would, ultimately, though slowly, raise up the foundations of many generations. It would command, however, but a small portion of the

resources which would readily be furnished, and would defer needlessly a consummation so devoutly to be wished. A general society might, therefore, be formed, for the special purpose of building up the wastes of the State; or, should it be judged most expedient, the missionary society of the State might be authorized to hold moneys, and the several congregations to make annual contributions, for that purpose. The manner may be a subject of deliberation at the proper time; but that funds can be raised to help the desolate, — that our ruins can be built, and must be built,— does not admit of a doubt. In a few years, should no calamity defer the enterprise, every waste may be built; and the funds raised for this purpose be consecrated to the benevolent work of building the wastes of other States, and other lands.

To the preceding means may properly be added, for the purpose of preservation, as well as restoration, the special enterprise of ministers in the performance of pastoral duties.

This will include the particular regard of each pastor to the wastes within his own limits. Many causes conspire to interrupt the attention of distant villages and neighborhoods to the public worship of God, and to introduce a relaxation of religious and moral order. To counteract these effects of local circumstances, occasional visits and the preaching of lectures are indispensable. Such attention is an act of justice to the distant districts of a congregation, who pay equally for the support of the Gospel, and cannot, without some such attention, be made equally partakers of its blessings; it conciliates affection also, and binds the extremities of a congregation to the sanctuary of their fathers, by stronger ligaments than can otherwise be found. It is a means of preservation, too, which, if not employed by ourselves to unite, will

infallibly be employed by others to alienate and divide. Great benefits have been found to accrue from weekly lectures in different districts of the congregation. They contribute very much to keep alive the attention of the people to the subject of religion, and afford to the pastor opportunity of becoming more intimately acquainted with his flock, as well as of approaching their consciences in a more plain and yet forcible manner. Such assemblages of districts promote kind affections among themselves, accommodate the aged and the feeble, and call up the attention of many to the subject of religion, and allure to the sanctuary of God many who otherwise might have slept away the day of grace.

We may not, in this place, omit to add pastoral visits, as among the best of ministerial duties for the preservation of the church.

There is no congregation where they may not, with prudence, be introduced; and, usually, with the most ardent approbation of the people. In their progress, the pastor enters every family of his charge, the rich and the poor alike, to pray with them, catechize the children, inquire after the spiritual welfare of all, and to communicate such advice, exhortation or reproof, as the circumstances of each family shall demand, and his own discretion dictate. Such visits may, unquestionably, be ranked among the most efficacious labors of a minister for the salvation of his people. They increase greatly his affection for them. They make him acquainted with the children of his charge, and furnish a minuteness of information not otherwise to be obtained, and without which he could not be qualified to give to every one his portion in due season. They will occupy, indeed, considerable time; but, by furnishing a variety of interesting subjects, and increased facilities of composition, they will redeem

as much time as they occupy. Any man will be able to preach better on the Sabbath, after visiting his people two days in the week, than he would be, had his whole time been devoted to study. He will then have an object while he writes, and when he speaks; and will write and speak with an animation which nothing but a deep interest in his subject can inspire.

To parochial visits it will be proper to add an efficient system for the instruction of children and young people in the doctrines and duties of religion.

It would seem proper, where the season will permit, that the children of the congregation (who ought, all of them, as far as possible, to attend public worship) be catechized by a committee of the church, in the interval of public worship; and that stated catechetical examinations of all the children of the congregation be attended by the pastor and a committee of the church at least semi-annually, and, if practicable, quarterly.*

It is also unspeakably important, that a system of religious instruction adapted to the age and altered feelings of young people be provided, to succeed the shorter catechism. In most cases, the whole system of religious instruction by the church and by parents ceases with the period of childhood.

A species of false shame renders young people reluctant to repeat the catechism, it being regarded as a badge of childhood; and no alternative being provided, they stay at home, forget what they have learned, and efface, by the dissipating influence of levity, the serious impressions of early life. For

* Since this was written, the system of Sabbath-schools has more than realized all that at the time had been asked or thought.

a long period, they escape from pastoral influence; some become irreligious and dissolute, and never return; and none return, until the Spirit of God revives the tender feelings of childhood, and brings into the fold his wandering lambs.

A system of instruction is needed, therefore, suited to the age and altered circumstances of youth, which shall prevent their breaking the bands of Christ, and keep them unceasingly within the reach of exhortation and pastoral influence. The period when their education has ordinarily ceased is precisely the period when it is most needed, when its influence for their conversion would be most hopeful, and their emancipation from its restraint the most perilous.*

We have only to add to the list of means for the restoration of decayed churches and congregations, earnest prayer among the churches, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon these desolations, and the revival of religion. It is by revivals only that the waste places in this State can be effectually built up; and all the preceding means are to be employed with a direct reference to a revival of religion. But no means will avail without the special power of God to render them effectual. The Lord God Almighty must build the old wastes among us by a high hand, and an outstretched arm; but for all this will he be inquired of by the churches to do it for them. And where the preceding course of exertion is adopted, and followed by the united supplica-

* This continued attention of young people to religious instruction, and this salutary access of their pastor to them, has been successfully accomplished, in some instances, by youthful libraries and moral schools; sometimes, by stated lectures for the exposition of the catechism; and recently, perhaps in the highest degree, by means of the Biblical Catechism of Mr. Wilbur, and the associations of young people which it has occasioned, for the purpose of gaining an acquaintance with the Bible.

tions of the churches for the blessing of God, with exultation we may announce, "The time to favor Zion has come; for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof."

III. The motives to immediate exertion for the purpose of building the old wastes now claim our attention.

1. It is the duty of churches to help decayed sister churches to rise.

Particular churches are not organized for their own edification exclusively, but for mutual assistance and coöperation in building up the Redeemer's kingdom. The Gospel recognizes no independent churches. All are the subjects of one kingdom, to whose prosperity they are mutually devoted. All are citizens of one city, assailed by a common enemy, and associated for the common defence. All are members of the same family, bound together by a common interest, and by common ties of blood. All are members of one body united in a common head, from which all the body, knit together by joints and bands, and having nourishment ministered, increaseth with the increase of God. There is a fellowship of churches which Jesus Christ has constituted, and relative duties which he has enjoined. These duties are, sympathy in joy and sorrow, counsel, admonition, and pecuniary aid, as circumstances may require. It is not a matter of discretion, then, whether the churches of Connecticut shall help feeble sister churches. They are bound to do it. In becoming churches, they have assumed a relation to each other, the duties of which are as plain and as indispensable as the duties of husband and wife, or parent and child. According to our ability, we that are strong are bound to help the feeble. Is it our duty to minister to the hungry the bread that perisheth,— and can we be at liberty to withhold the

bread of life? Are we bound to do good unto all men as we have opportunity,— and may we yet overlook the household of faith? Are the members of the same church bound to look, not every man on his own things, but every man, also, on the things of others,— and may churches contract themselves within their own selfish circumference, regarding with a cold heart and an unhelping hand the necessities of other churches? If there be no love to God in the individual professor, who hath this world's goods, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion against a needy brother, can churches practise towards churches the same hard-hearted parsimony, and be guiltless? or must we draw the alarming inference, that the love of God dwelleth not in churches, if they disregard the afflictions of destitute churches, and withhold the necessary aid? Is it our duty to send the Gospel to the destitute in the new settlements in other States, and to the heathen in other lands; and can we be at liberty to witness, as idle spectators, the extinction of sister churches, and the return of heathenism at home?

The primitive churches understood the relative duties of churches, as we have explained them. The whole primitive church was one great association for charitable purposes, and exerted for centuries, and in the midst of persecution, a boundless enterprise to propagate the Gospel. They gave, not to support preachers only, but to support preachers and hearers also, whom persecution had made desolate. The same sympathy and efficacious charity distinguished the churches of the reformation. And when our fathers came to this land, they, being many members, were yet one body. A strong sympathy made them partakers of each other's joys and sorrows. "Then might be seen magistrates and ministers together, in way of advice; ministers and ministers cleaving

together, in the way of communion; churches and churches together, in way of consultation, by greater and less synods; magistrates and ministers and their people together, uniting hands and hearts in the common cause, breathing a public spirit, and conspiring with holy zeal and vigor to advance the kingdom of Christ. Oh, the uniting glory then manifest! Grace, ruling and ordering both rulers and people under the glorious banners of true Gospel holy love. Then were colonies united and courts united, magistrates united and ministers united, churches united and plantations united."*

The consociation of the churches of this State in the year 1708 is an express recognition of the relation which churches bear to each other according to the Gospel, and a voluntary, implied engagement to fulfil towards each other all righteousness. Nor have the feeling or the duties of this relation utterly ceased; but they are feeble and limited in their practical influence. Sister churches have been overrun with error,— divided, broken down, and even annihilated; and nothing but good advice and good wishes has been interposed. Instead of a general lamentation that a light in Israel should be put out, it is not known to many churches that such calamities have come upon us. But they have come. There are grievous desolations in this State: societies might be named where the church is extinct, and the house of God in ruins; the blasts of winter rave through it, the flocks of summer find a shelter in it, the Sabbath is a holiday; the authority of revelation has ceased with many, and, by others, is employed to sanction doctrines not less destructive than atheism. Preachers are patronized whose object is to

* Church's Fast Sermon, page 14.

keep the audience laughing, by ridiculing the ministers and the doctrines of the Gospel. A revival of religion would be regarded with as virulent enmity as Jews or Pagans regarded Christianity. There are districts as far from heaven, and (without help) as hopeless of heaven, as the pagans of Hindostan or China. Will the churches sleep over such ruins? Can nothing be done to repair these desolations of many generations?

2. Unless these desolations are built, they will become more desolate.

The heart of man is desperately wicked; and, freed from the restraints of religious instruction, will go on indefinitely from bad to worse. Where the restraints of religion cease to operate, the restraint of law will also be speedily unknown; for the plain reason, that, in such communities, there will be none to execute the laws. The result will be intemperance, profane swearing, gambling, idleness, poverty, hatred, variance, strife, disease, and woe.

Were these temporal calamities the chief miseries of such desolations, their claim upon our Christian sympathy would not be small. But these are only the beginnings of sorrow. The bondage of corruption, commencing here, will extend through eternity. The career of iniquity, here begun, will hold on its unobstructed course, and never end. There is no bottom to the pit in which these wastes have begun to sink; no limit to the woes which are before them, and little hope that they will ever escape. The aged die with the measure of their iniquity full, and children are born to fill up the measure of their fathers, until wrath, to the uttermost, come upon them. No revivals approach to burst the bands of wickedness, and proclaim liberty to the captive; no day of hope dawns, no ray of light breaks in. There is no rain,

neither any dew upon them from heaven, and no breath of the Lord visits the bones, which are dry, very dry. Brethren, is there no help? Among all the churches in this State dwelling at ease, is there no eye to pity, no arm to save?

3. If these waste places are not built, they will exert a powerful influence to create other wastes, and extend the scene of desolation.

The inhabitants of neighboring towns exert no inconsiderable influence upon each other. The good encourage the good, and the bad countenance and strengthen the bad. By means of intercourse, their opinions, views and feelings, are interchanged; the moral atmosphere of each is breathed by the other to an extent which will sensibly affect the moral system of both. Beside, each waste, like Babel, will yearly send out its host of emigrants, of many tongues,—strangers to the fear of the Lord, and furious in their opposition to our civil and religious order, and prepared to exert always a pernicious, and sometimes, as circumstances favor, a fatal influence, upon the town or society in which they reside.

From these wastes also sally forth the infidel, seeking whom he may devour; the Universalist, to quiet profligates in sin, and multiply their number; the political empiric, to augment his party; and the sectarian of every name, to proselyte; until a broad circumference around shall become as divided, and weak, and dissolute, as Babel itself. Evil communications corrupt good manners. Their word eateth as doth a canker. A conflagration on the borders of a city is not more to be dreaded than a society bereft of the Gospel, emancipated from the fear of the Lord, and self-destroyed, is to be feared by neighboring societies. Facts, lamentable facts, may be found in this State, to justify these apprehensions. There are, at this moment, waste places, which exert

precisely the kind of influence which we have ascribed to them.

4. If the wastes among us are not built, they will undermine, ultimately, the civil and religious order of the State.

Our past unity and strength, in a civil point of view, have been owing to the very extended and happy coincidence of religious views and feelings in this State. Destroy this coincidence, and you disseminate the causes of jealousy and alienation, and multiply the difficulties of legislation. It was the conflict of religious competition that brought Charles to the block, and broke down, for a time, the strong government of England. And let the wastes in this State multiply, till one-third of the freemen shall care for no religion, a third attach themselves to various seceding denominations, and a remnant only walk in the old way, and the unity of our counsels and the vigor of our government would be gone. The business of legislation would become a scene of intrigue and competition, of religious and political ambition, of temporizing compromise, and bargain and sale. Each party would soon have its ambitious leaders, who would kindle the fire to warm themselves by, and cry persecution to seat themselves in high places. Each party would be kept organized by demagogues for political use, and the fire of the State would go up to heaven as the smoke of a great furnace, and all our blessings would perish in the flames. But to such a state of things the multiplication of waste places will inevitably bring us. They are not warts merely, to mar the beauty of the face; but cancers corroding the heart's blood, and fastening their fibres upon the vitals. The religious and civil order of this State commenced their existence together, and together they will live or expire. One was made for the other, or rather one was made *by* the other. Without the

religious order, to form the conscience and establish the fear of the Lord, our civil institutions, which have stood almost two centuries, could not have endured a year. Let the ancient churches in this State, one after another, be broken down, and the doctrines which have purified and cheered them cease to be heard, and soon Connecticut will be Connecticut no more. Like Esau we may seek carefully, with tears, what our folly has abandoned; but no repentance will retrieve our ruin. Our laws, habits, and manners, are the result of our religion; all other causes combined have not had so much influence; remove this master-spring, and every movement will stop,—bid the soul depart, and that moment will the body die. But who would risk the tremendous experiment? Have our religious institutions been so barren of good to us, that we may lightly trifle them away in search of better; or is experimenting in religion so harmless a thing, that if the right form does not come out of the fire, we can restore the molten mass to its former uses? No,—let the prevailing religious order of the State be once broken down, and it is gone forever. What injustice would this be to the dead! It is not two hundred years since the forest waved where our towns now stand, and the war-whoop was echoed from the heavens. To these abodes of desolation our fathers came to plant these churches which now survive them, and to transmit those doctrines which now enlighten them, and to establish, unfettered by European usage, those institutions which might bless their posterity till the second coming of our Lord: and God was with them. They accomplished their work and went to heaven, leaving to their posterity only the labor of preserving what they had bequeathed. And now shall we listen to the siren tongue of charity, inviting us to substitute another order, and another Gospel? And shall the cry of

bigotry prevent our contending earnestly for their preservation? Shall the miner steadily pursue his work, and foundations fail, and desolations multiply, and no alarm be sounded, and no counteracting efforts be made? How could we answer it to God, should we do so? How could we look our fathers in the face, should we meet them in heaven?

5. The time past is more than sufficient to have neglected our duty and slept over our dangers. For twenty years, a combination of inauspicious influence has been exerted, without cessation, upon the religious order of the State, with very little systematic influence in the way of self-preservation. We have trusted to our laws, to our habits, to the good sense of the people; and, in common times, these might have sufficed. But on common times we have not fallen; and, to meet the change, common exertions are not sufficient. Other religious denominations have not been inattentive to the increase and preservation of their churches, while we, unadmonished by circumstances, have kept on in the beaten track. Indeed, we have for so long a time borne patiently every assault, that to assail *us* is deemed a right, and resistance on our part, even in self-defence, is deemed persecution. With the loving speech of charity and toleration, the onset is made upon us; but, if we open our lips, if we lift a finger, if we do not retreat and abandon to strangers the heritage of our fathers, if we do not even help them to destroy us, the heavens are rent with the cry of bigotry and persecution. Is it not time, then, to awake to our duty,— that, by a vigorous enterprise, we may retrieve what is past, and stop the progress of decline? The causes which have laid us waste are, many of them, still in operation; and, without a special counteracting influence, will not be confined to their present limits. Other churches will become feeble, and the feeble desolate.

Ambition, covetousness, irreligion, revenge, and false zeal, by their continual droppings, will wear away, piecemeal, our firm foundations. The children of alienated families are multiplying, and their education, or want of it, are operating alike to change the character of the State. Their opinions, their property, their example, and their suffrage, will have its influence in every town, and upon all our public concerns, changing silently, and to a fatal extent, the civil, the moral, and the religious character of the State.

A few words in the application of this discourse may properly be addressed to the pastor elect.

My Brother:

From this discourse you perceive your duty to this people, and to the church of God. To you, though an earthen vessel, is committed that treasure which is able to enrich them forever. Upon your fidelity, under God, will depend their eternal destiny. To become faithful, you must study. Neither talents nor piety will supersede the necessity of application. The mind must be disciplined, or it will lose its vigor; it must receive, or it cannot communicate. Sermons must be studied, or they will be commonplace, pointless compositions. Unstudied written sermons are as much more intolerable than extemporary effusions, as methodical dulness is more irksome than immethodical zeal; for, as to matter, both will hang in even scales. But study is not all; you must act. You must take care of the wastes in your own limits. You must be instant in season and out of season, to preach the Gospel to your people; calling together, from week to week, the different districts of your charge, to speak to them the words of eternal life. To you is committed the care of the lambs of this flock. Your discretion, and enter-

prise, and influence, will be the spring of that whole system of religious education, which, under God, must determine their character for time and eternity. You are to catechize them, and to stimulate the church and every family in your charge to the work of religious education. It becomes you to acquire, as you easily may do, an all-pervading influence among your people, under which they shall assume a character and stability such as they ought to possess. That prudence in a minister which would avoid difficulties by doing nothing is pernicious. It is your duty to be active, and prudent too. It is not enough that your charge grows no worse; you must be sadly deficient, if, without special hindrances, they do not grow better. But, to gain this all-pervading influence, you must love your people, and secure to yourself a reciprocal attachment; and, to do this, you must be faithful to them. You must know your flock, attend religious meetings, pray by the bed of the sick, visit mourners, and go from house to house, to teach them and to do them good.

Such, brother, is the work in which you are about to engage. Do you shrink from such toil,— such exclusive consecration to your work? Have you much collateral business of your own: a literary field to cultivate for fame,— a vineyard of your own to till, and flocks to tend, for filthy lucre's sake? Now, then, is the time to stop; for it is better not to vow than to vow and not perform. If private Christians cannot serve God and mammon, much less can faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus. But if your heart's desire is, to give yourself wholly to the Lord, and to know nothing among your people, save Jesus Christ and him crucified,— and if still, at times, the cankering thought arise, What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?— then, brother, have faith in God. Behold the fowls of the air;

for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Trust, then, in the Lord, and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed. For it is not merely a duty enjoined upon others, that they which preach the Gospel shall live of the Gospel, but a promise also given to his ministers, which Jesus will not fail to verify. Be faithful, then, to God and to your people. Give them your time, your talents, and your prayers. Let them know, from experience, the blessings of a faithful ministry; and God, I doubt not, will both incline and enable them to take care of you.

You perceive, also, from what has been said, your duty to the church of God generally. No minister liveth for his own charge exclusively. An extended field lies open before him, to be cultivated by the joint labors of pastors and churches. To you, with others, will appertain a friendly care of vacant churches and waste places. To you it belongs, as a guardian of the church, to attend statedly the several ecclesiastical meetings of the church, that you may know her interest, and afford your counsel and coöperation for the general good. Indolence, or indifference, or worldly business, which produces a neglect of ecclesiastical meetings, and of enterprise in the business of the church, will limit your influence to do good, diminish your zeal to do good, and subtract essentially from your stimulus to pastoral fidelity among your own people. Nor is your eye, or heart, or hand, to be confined to the narrow limits of an association. The State, the nation, the world, demand your prayers, and charities, and enterprise. Do you sink under such a weight? It is enough to crush an angel; but, through Christ strengthening you, you can do it all.

The church and congregation in this place will now permit a brief application of what has been said to themselves.

We have heard, friends and brethren, with great satisfaction, of your high estimation of Gospel privileges, and of your very laudable exertions to avert from yourselves and your children the multiplied evils of becoming a waste place. Upon principles of policy, you have acted wisely. Upon principles of the strictest economy, you have acted a saving part; for, had you fallen, the tax of your vices had been more than four times the expense of supporting the Gospel. The tax of intemperance, of litigation, and of sickness, induced by the excesses which prevail where the Gospel does not restrain men, would grind you to the dust. "There is, that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty;" and in no case is this proverb more strikingly verified than in those parsimonious calculations by which societies curtail to themselves the privileges of the Gospel.

You perceive, brethren, from the sketch given in this discourse, what your pastor is called to do; and you cannot but perceive that your best good demands that all of it should be done, and that to do the whole will occupy every moment of his time. If, in reality, you were unable to support him, so that he might devote to your service his whole time,— in that case, could no help be derived from other churches, after the example of Paul, it might be his duty by his own hands to minister to his necessities. But if the same wisdom guide you which hitherto has seemed to prevail, you will see to it that the necessity be *real*, and not imaginary; the result of a natural and not a moral inability; created by the providence of God, and not by that covetousness which is idolatry. As much as in you lieth, you will see to it that no avocations of

necessity divert him from those labors which your best good demands.

It is a sad mistake, too often countenanced by ministers themselves, that small congregations are unable to support the Gospel; when the fact is, that no congregation is able to do without the Gospel: for the tax of desolation is four times as expensive as the tax which is requisite to support the institutions of religion. This is no fiction. Go to those societies which have judged themselves unable to support the Gospel; — go to parents, and demand the items squandered by their prodigal children, beside breaking their hearts by their undutiful conduct. Go to the tavern, on the Sabbath-day and on week-days; attend the arbitrations, the courts, the trainings, the horse-racings, and the midnight revels; witness the decayed houses, fences, and tillage, the falling school-house, and tattered children of barbarous manners; and then return to your own little paradise, and decide whether you will exile the Gospel, as too expensive to be supported. If you are too poor to support the Gospel, you are, demonstrably, too poor to do without it; — if the one would severely press you, the other would grind you to powder. A few families may thrive in waste places, but it will be upon the vices of the rest; the greater portion will be poor, and ignorant, and vicious. Do you demand how a poor people can support the Gospel? Let them first appreciate the privilege according to its importance; and then let the father, and the mother, and the son, and the daughter, and the servant, lay, weekly, a light tax upon their pride, and another upon appetite needlessly gratified; and add to these savings another item acquired by some special effort for the purpose, and another as God shall have prospered their lawful industry, and the result of the whole would be an abundant supply.

Any ten families of ordinary property could better afford to support the Gospel than to do without it. When societies calculate what they can afford to give for the support of the Gospel, they go upon the supposition that what they do give is so much subtracted, annually, from the whole amount of their income; a supposition which is utterly erroneous,— for, in fact, as it respects the diminution of property, they give nothing. The Gospel is not a debtor to those who support it, but they are debtors to the Gospel. It does not subtract from the property of a society, but adds to it more than it takes away. It is God himself who has said, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thy increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." This duty of supporting the worship of God has not ceased with the Jewish dispensation, nor has this promise been repealed; and the whole providence of God, to this day, has been a practical confirmation of his faithfulness in its fulfilment. The Jews often distrusted this assurance, and robbed God to save their property; but they were always reduced by the experiment. They sowed much and brought in little; and when it was gathered, God did blow upon it. The dew of heaven was stayed, and the earth did not yield her increase. "Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts, and all

nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts." *

The same rule of administration is regarded still; the curse of Heaven still fastens upon communities that despise the Gospel, and neglect its support. Their decline in outward prosperity is notorious; and their restoration is no less manifest, when, convinced of their folly, they make a competent provision for the public worship of God. Nor is the fact mysterious, or miraculous; since the life of man, his health, his wisdom to plan and strength to execute, the life and vigor of his flocks and herds, every stalk of grain and every blade of grass, are in the hand of God. In ten thousand ways he can add to or subtract from your income. A fit of sickness, a broken bone, a profligate child, a vexatious lawsuit, a dearth or a flood, a murrain among your cattle or a blast on your field, may cut off, at once, all your sacrilegious savings; while his blessing can, in as many ways, make you rich, and add no sorrow with it. You may give, therefore, with an unsparing hand, as exigencies demand, for the support of the Gospel; and it shall be given unto you again, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. Your cruise of oil shall not fail, and your barrel of meal shall not waste.

My beloved brethren in the ministry:

Permit me to address to you, also, a word of exhortation, on this interesting occasion. If the views we have taken in this discourse are correct, have we not occasion to blush and to tremble at our past deficiencies? But what shall we do? Weary of our Master's work, or disheartened by past delinquency, shall we stop, and in despondency resign our com-

* Malachi 3: 9—12.

mission and abandon our work? Or shall we this day renew our ordination vows, and go home to our people, resolving, in the strength of the Redeemer, to do better for the time to come? Which of us could bear to leave our work as it is, and go to judgment with the account of his stewardship? How many superfluous things have we done, wasting our precious time? How many important duties have we neglected, putting in jeopardy the souls of our people? How often might we have spoken to edification, when we have held our peace? How many pastoral visits might we have made, which we have not? How many district lectures might we have preached, which have not been heard; how many precious prayer-meetings attended, which, through our negligence, have had no existence; and how feeble, in our societies, is the whole amount of our moral influence, compared with what it might have been, had we done our duty with all our might? What shall we say, brethren? Shall we seek to lighten the tax of guilt, by denying the extent of our duty? It is at our peril that we do it. The glory of God, the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, the welfare of souls, the terrors of the Lord, the love of Jesus, and our own solemn vows, — all demand, at our hands, more than has been suggested in this discourse. Twice have we given ourselves to the Lord, — once when he delivered us from the horrid pit, and again when he counted us faithful, putting us into the ministry. The vows of God are upon us, and we *cannot* go back. We *must* do our duty; woe be to us if we do not preach the Gospel, and fulfil its appropriate duties. Besides, we live in a peculiar day. Exertions which once might suffice to avert desolation are not sufficient now. The law which operated once to prevent the dissolution of congregations can be evaded, and is evaded, by every man whose

impiety, or covetousness, or resentment, prompts him to do it. Personal attachment to the minister is now the strongest bond of union; and to hold together by this bond a society of fallen men demands no ordinary vigilance and fidelity. Our predecessors might do less than their duty, and the primary impulse, unresisted, would cause things to move on in the right way. But now the resistance is increased, and the impelling forces diminished; and nothing but an impulse carefully and constantly applied will keep things in their proper course.

The necessity of study is not diminished, but the necessity of action has greatly increased. Action is now the order of the day; for, beside the peculiar exigencies of our own people, and the churches in this State, such a field of labor is opening before us as the world never saw. Jesus is coming quickly to take possession of the earth, and is now putting in requisition the hearts, the thoughts, the time and strength, of all his ministers; and which of us will not rejoice that it is so, and give him all?

SERMON V.

THE BIBLE A CODE OF LAWS.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." PSALM 19: 7—10.

WE have, in this Psalm, a concise account of the discovery of the glory of God, made by his works and by his word. "The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy work." But these disclosures of the heavens, "whose line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world," though they create obligation, and discover guilt, are not sufficient to restrain the depravity of man, nor to disclose an atonement for him, nor to announce terms of pardon, nor to sanctify the soul.

But the law of the Lord is perfect. Adapted to the exigencies of a lost world, it speaks on all those subjects on which no speech is heard from the heavens, and is attended with glorious efficacy. It converts the soul; it makes wise the simple; it rejoices the heart; it produces a fear of the Lord, which endures forever; and to all who have felt its sanctifying power, it is more precious than gold, and sweeter than honey.

THE TEXT, THEN, TEACHES US TO REGARD THE WORD OF GOD AS CONTAINING THE LAWS OF A MORAL GOVERNMENT, REVEALED FOR THE ILLUSTRATION OF HIS GLORY IN THE SALVATION OF MAN.

In discoursing upon this subject, it is proposed,

I. To illustrate the nature of moral government; and,

II. To show that the Scriptures are to be regarded as containing a system of moral laws, revealed to illustrate the glory of God, in the salvation of man.

I. A moral government is *the influence of law upon accountable creatures.* It includes a law-giver, accountable subjects, and laws intelligibly revealed, and maintained by rewards and punishments, according to the character and deeds of the subjects. To accountability in the subjects are requisite,— understanding, to perceive the rule of action; conscience, to feel moral obligation; and the power of choice, in the view of motives. Understanding, to perceive the rule of action, does not constitute accountable agency; choice, without the capacity of feeling obligation, does not constitute accountable agency;— but the capacity of understanding, and conscience, and choice, united, do constitute an accountable agent. The laws of God and man recognize these properties of mind as the foundation of accountability. A statue is not accountable, for it has no perception or choice; an idiot is not, for, though he may have choice, he has no competent understanding to perceive a moral rule, nor conscience to feel moral obligation; and a lunatic is not, because, though he may have choice and conscience, he has not the unperverted exercise of his understanding.

The faculties, then, of understanding, conscience, and choice, constitute an accountable agent; and their existence is as decisive evidence of free agency as the five senses are of

the existence of the body; and nothing is inconsistent with free agency, or annihilates the evidence of its existence, which does not destroy one or more of these faculties of the mind.

Law, as the medium of moral government, includes precepts and sanctions intelligibly revealed. The precept is directory; it discloses what is to be done. The sanctions are influential; they present the motives to obedience included in the comprehensive terms of reward and punishment. But, to have influence, the precepts and the motives must be presented to the mind. The law, in all its parts, must be intelligible, otherwise it is not a law. A law may be unknown, and yet be obligatory, when the ignorance is voluntary; but never, when it is unavoidable. The influence of law as the medium of moral government is the influence of motives upon accountable creatures; and the effect of this influence is always the actual exercise of free agency in choice or action. The influence of motives cannot destroy free agency; for it is the influence of persuasion only, and results only in choice, which, in the presence of understanding and conscience, is free agency. If there were no objects of preference or aversion exhibited to the mind, there could no more be choice or free agency, than there could be vision without external objects of sight. Direct irresistible impulse, moving the mind to action, would not be moral government; and if motives, in the view of which the mind chooses and acts, were coercive of choice, accountability and moral government would be impossible.

The administration of a moral government includes whatever may be necessary to give efficacy to its laws. Its chief influence is felt in the cognizance it takes of the conduct of subjects, and the evidence it affords of certain retribution according to their deeds. In some points, there is a coinci-

dence between natural and moral government; and in others, a difference. They agree in this fact, that the subjects of each are influenced to act as they would not without government. To suppose complete exemption from any kind or degree of influence from without to be indispensable to free agency, is at war with common sense, and daily observation, and every man's own consciousness. What is family government, what is civil government, what is temptation, exhortation or persuasion; and what are the influences of the Holy Spirit, but the means, and the effectual means, of influencing the volitions of the human heart, and the conduct of human life? To deny the possibility of control by motives without destroying free agency, annihilates the moral government of God, and is atheism. It shuts him out of the world and out of the universe, as moral governor. It blots out his laws as nugatory, emancipates every subject from his moral influence, and leaves him not an inch of territory on earth or in heaven over which to sway the sceptre of legislation. He must sit upon his throne as an idle spectator of all moral exercise and action, receiving no praise for what he has done from saint or angel. "By the grace of God I am what I am," must have been a falsehood when uttered upon earth, and a sentiment not to be repeated in heaven.

Natural and moral government may agree, also, as to the certainty of their influence. It may be as certain that an honest man will not steal as if he was loaded with chains and could not move a finger; and it may be as certain that an intemperate man will drink to excess, when he has opportunity, as if the liquid were poured down his throat by irresistible power. But they differ entirely as to their subjects, and the manner of producing their results. Natural government is direct, irresistible impulse. Moral government is

persuasion; and the result of it is voluntary action in the view of motives.

Free agency cannot be conceived to exist, and probably cannot exist, in any other manner than by the exhibition of motives to voluntary agents, the result of which shall be choice and action. The precise idea of moral government, then, is the influence of law upon the volitions and conduct of intelligent accountable creatures.

II. I am to show that the Scriptures are to be regarded as containing the laws of a moral government, revealed to illustrate the glory of God in the salvation of man.

The glory of God comprehends his attributes and character. The illustration of his glory is the exhibition of his attributes and character to intelligent beings, as the object of supreme complacency and enjoyment. The plan of Redemption is the particular system of action which the Most High has chosen as the medium of illustration; and this plan includes the system of moral laws contained in the Bible. That the Bible is to be regarded as revealing a system of moral laws, is evident from many considerations. The Most High has there expressly revealed himself as a lawgiver. His power, wisdom, and goodness,— his justice, mercy, and truth,— are exhibited not as abstract qualities, but as attributes illustrated by the laws and administration of a moral government. Man, the subject of these laws, possesses indisputably all the properties of an accountable agent,— understanding, conscience, and the power of choice; and in the Scriptures is recognized as accountable. Did the Most High create all things to illustrate his glory? It is a glory which can be displayed only in the administration of a moral government. How can justice be manifested where there are no laws, and no accountable subjects? How can mercy be displayed where there is

no transgression; or truth be illustrated where there is no intelligent mind to witness the accordance of declaration with fact, or of conduct with promises? The Most High is expressly denominated king, lawgiver, and judge. The legislative, judicial, and executive power are in the same hands; and the Scriptures are denominated the law of the Lord, his statutes, his commandments. The contents of the Bible illustrate its character as a revealed system of precepts and motives. There is the moral law in ten commandments, and its summary import comprised in two; and there is the Gospel, composed, no less than the law, of precepts enforced by sanctions. As a *rule of life*, it adopts the moral law; but as a *system of salvation*, it prescribes its own specific duties of repentance and faith, enforced by its own most glorious and fearful sanctions. Whatever instruction is contained in the Scriptures, historical or biographical, is all directory as a precept, or influential as a motive to obedience. All the institutions of the Bible have for their object the preservation of truth in the mind, or the impression of it upon the heart, as the means of restoring men from sin to holiness. The day of judgment, as described by our Saviour, consummates the evidence that the Bible is to be regarded as embodying the laws of the divine moral government below. On that day the graves open, and the dead, small and great, stand before God, and are judged according to the rule of action disclosed in the Bible, and the deeds done in the body.

INFERENCES.

1. If the Scriptures are to be regarded as containing the laws of a moral government, revealed to illustrate the glory of God in the salvation of man, then, undoubtedly, they have, on all subjects on which they speak, a determinate

meaning. It is the peculiar property of laws to be precise in their requirements and sanctions. A law which requires nothing specific is not a law. If it may mean, and does mean, many things, and yet no one thing in particular, it has no being.

If the Bible, in its precepts and doctrines, does not contain a distinct and precise meaning, it contains no meaning; it gives no illustration of the glory of God, no account of his will, of the state of man, of the character of the Saviour, or of the terms of life. A blank book of as many pages might as well have been sent down from heaven, for reason to scrawl its varied conjectures upon, as a Bible whose pages are occupied with unmeaning or equivocal declarations.

2. If the Bible contains the laws of a moral government in the manner explained, then it is possible to *ascertain*, and to *know that we have ascertained*, its real meaning. It not only contains a precise meaning, but one which, being understood, carries with it the evidence of its own correctness. It is often alleged that there are so many opinions concerning the doctrines of the Bible, that no man can know that his own belief is the true belief; and on the ground of this supposed inevitable uncertainty is founded the plea of universal charity and liberality: sweet-sounding words for universal indifference or universal scepticism! For who can be ardently attached to uncertainty, or who can believe any revealed truth with confidence, when his cardinal maxim is that the doctrines of the Bible are obscure and uncertain? But who is this that libels his Maker as the author of an obscure and useless system of legislation, which no subject can understand, or, if he does, can have competent evidence of the fact;—so obscure, that they who discard it wholly are little incommoded by the loss, and entitled to little less complacency

than those who grope in vain after its bewildered dictates;—so obscure, that those who err are more entitled to pity than to condemnation; and afford as indubitable evidence of *fidelity* in examination, and *sincerity* in believing *wrong*, as those do, who, by mere accident, have stumbled on the truth, without the possibility of knowing it?

This is, indeed, a kind-hearted system in its aspect upon man, but how tremendous its reäction upon the character of God! Why are his revealed statutes, with their sanctions, so obscure? Because he *could not* make them intelligible? You impeach his wisdom. Why, then, are they so obscure? Because he *would not* make them plain? You impeach his justice; for he commands his truth to be loved and obeyed,—an unjust demand, if its obscurity prevents the possibility of understanding it.

But it is demanded, *How* can you *know* that your opinion, among various conflicting opinions, is exclusively correct? You may believe that you are right, but your neighbor believes that he is right; and you are both equally confident, and both appeal to the Bible. If the question were, How can I *cause my neighbor to know* that his opinion is incorrect and mine true, I should admit that the difficulty, in given cases, may be utterly insurmountable. But to suppose that, because I cannot make others perceive evidence which I perceive, therefore my perception brings with it to me no evidence of truth, implies that there is no such thing as *moral certainty* derived from evidence; and that the man who believes a fact upon evidence has in himself no better ground of certainty than the man who believes a fact without evidence, or even against evidence; that a reality, actually seen and felt to be such, affords to him who either sees or feels no higher evidence of its existence, than a fiction, supposed

to be a reality, affords of its actual existence. That is, a thing which does not exist may possess as high claims to be recognized as a reality as a real existence supported by evidence; for error in competition with truth is, in fact, a non-existence opposed to a reality. Now, the man who holds an erroneous opinion may be as confident of its truth as the man who believes the truth; but is there, in the nature of things, the same foundation for his confidence? Has not the man who sees the truth and its evidence *knowledge* which the deceived man has not? If you deny it, you deny first principles; you annihilate the efficacy of evidence as the basis of knowledge, and introduce universal scepticism. Every vagary of the imagination, and every prejudice of the heart, are as likely to be true as points most clearly proved.

But if the *confidence* in truth and falsehood be the same, how can you be sure that you *do see* what you think you do; and that *your* opinion is not the mental deception? It is the same question repeated, and I return the same answer: I can know, if my opinion *be* correct, that it *is* so, because evidence seen and felt creates a moral certainty; because reality affords evidence above fiction, and existence affords evidence above non-existence. How can fiction annihilate realities; and how can deception cancel the perceived evidence of truth?

If you would witness the folly of the maxim, that truth and evidence afford no certainty amid conflicting opinions, reduce it to practice. The man who dreams is as confident that he is awake as I am, who in reality am awake. Is it, then, doubtful which is awake, and utterly impossible for me to decide whether I dream or my neighbor? The lunatic feels as confident that he is a king as the occupant of the

throne. The royal personage, then, must hold his thoughts *in equilibrio;* for here is belief opposed to belief, and confidence opposed to confidence. Do you say that the man is insane? But he believes all except himself to be insane; and who can tell that any man is in his right mind, so long as there is a lunatic upon earth to question it?

Godwin taught, and many a robber has professed to believe, that private property is an encroachment upon the rights of man. If your purse, then, should be demanded upon the highway, you may not refuse; for the robber believes his opinion about liberty and equality to be true, and you believe yours to be true, and both are equally confident. It is also a *speculative opinion*, about which you differ, and one concerning which great men have differed, and, perhaps, always will differ. You need not reason with him; for, since you cannot be sure that *you* are right, how can you expect to make *him* know what you cannot know *yourself?* and as to the law of the land, it would be persecution, *for a mere matter of opinion*, to appeal to that, even if you could. Besides, how could a court and jury decide what is true, amid conflicting opinions on the subject; and what right have they *authoritatively to decide, and bind others by their decisions, upon matters of mere speculation?*

But how shall a man help himself who really and confidently believes falsehood to be truth? Just as other men in other cases help themselves, who, by folly or crime, have brought calamities upon themselves. How shall a man help himself who has wasted his property?—Perhaps he never will, but will die a beggar. How shall a man help himself who, through negligence or crime, has taken poison, and fallen into a lethargy?—He may never awake. Believing falsehood to be truth may be a calamity irretrievable: the

man must perish, if the error be a fundamental one, unless he renounce it and embrace the truth; and his case, in many instances, may be nearly hopeless. Instead of its being a trivial matter what our opinions are, it is easy, by the belief of error, to place ourselves almost beyond the hope of heaven, even in the very region of the shadow of death. What a man *may* do, and *ought* to do, is one thing; and what he *will* do may be, fatally, a different thing. "Their eyes have they closed, lest at any time they should see and be converted, and I should heal them."

3. If the Bible contains a system of Divine Laws, it is easy to perceive the high importance of revealed truth.

It exhibits the divine character as the great object of religious affection. It embodies the precepts of the divine moral government, prescribes the affections to be exercised, their nature, object, and degree; and the actions by which they are to be expressed. It embodies all the motives by which God restrains his subjects from transgression, and excites them to obedience. It exhibits the character of man as depraved and lost, and discloses by whom, and by what means, an atonement has been made, and upon what terms pardon may be obtained. It is the means employed by the Spirit of God to awaken the sinner to a sense of his danger, and to bring home to his heart a deep conviction of his guilt and just condemnation. It is by the *truth* that the Spirit of God converts the soul, and sanctifies the heart, and sheds abroad the love of God, and awakens hope, and diffuses peace and joy.

The truths of revelation are as important as the illustration of the glory of God, and the happiness of the holy universe caused and perpetuated by their instrumentality through all his dominions, and through eternity. In this view of the subject, how irreverent the maxim, "*No matter what a*

man believes, provided his life be correct :" a maxim which abrogates the law of God in its claims upon the heart; annihilates the doctrine that intention decides the moral nature of actions, and the doctrine that motives are the means of moral government; and reduces all obedience to the mere mechanical movements of the body. No matter whether a man believe or disbelieve the divine existence; whether he love or hate the Lord; whether he trust in or despise the Saviour; whether he repent of his sins or remain incorrigible; whether his motives to action be good or bad: if the mere motion of the lip, hand and foot, be according to rule, all is well. Is not this breaking the bands of Christ, and casting away his cords? Is it not saying to Jehovah, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways"? With equal irreverence, it is alleged to be of little consequence what a man *believes*, provided he be *sincere*. But what is sincerity? It is simply believing as we profess to believe; and the unblushing avowal is, that the Bible is a worthless book, no better than the Alcoran, or the fictions of paganism, or the superstitions of popery. "No matter what a man believes, *provided he does believe it!*" Falsehood, then, believed to be true, is just as pleasing to God, and just as salutary in its influence upon man, as the combined wisdom and goodness of God disclosed in his own most holy code of revealed laws.

The merest fictions of the brain, or the most malignant suggestions of a depraved heart, are as salutary as the laws of God. What authority have you for this opinion? Where have you learned that Jehovah is regardless of his honor, and the manifestation of his glory; is regardless of his laws, and their sanctions; is regardless of man, and the object of his affections, and the means of his salvation? You have not

learned this from the Bible. You are an infidel, if you believe the maxim that it is no matter what a man believes, provided he be sincere; and if you believe in no God but such a one as this maxim supposes, you are an atheist. The great end of all the works of Jehovah, according to the Bible, is the manifestation of his true character to created intelligences, as the source of everlasting love, and confidence, and joy, and praise. But this glory is not an object of direct vision,— it is manifested glory: and the system of manifestation is the plan of redemption disclosed in the Bible, and carried into effect by the Spirit of God, in giving efficacy to revealed truth in the sanctification and salvation of man. It is by the church that he makes known to principalities and powers, in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God. Without just conceptions, then, of revealed truth, the true character of God is not manifested; and cannot, of course, become an object of affection, or source of joy. Erroneous conceptions of revealed truth eclipse the glory of God in its progress to enlighten and enrapture the universe. They propagate falsehood concerning God through all parts of his dominions where they prevail, undermine confidence, annihilate affection, and extinguish joy. They arrest the work of redemption; for moral influence is the influence by which God redeems from sin, and revealed truth embodies that influence. When that light has been wantonly extinguished, God will not sanctify men by the sparks of their own kindling, or hold those guiltless who have perpetrated the deed. The Most High is not regardless of the opinions his subjects form concerning him. He has given them the means of forming just conceptions of his character; and if they wantonly libel their Maker to their own minds, or to others, he will punish them. He is not indifferent what objects we regard with supreme affection, and as our supreme

good. He has exhibited his true character, and commanded us to love him; and, if we pervert his character, and worship other gods, he will punish the idolatry. He is not regardless of his own laws, nor of the moral influence by which he restrains and sanctifies. He has made them plain; and it is at our peril, if we falsify them, and break their force upon our own minds, or the minds of others. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." "Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." Do these passages teach that it is of no consequence what a man believes, provided he is sincere?

4. If the Scriptures contain a system of Divine Laws, then, in expounding their meaning, their supposed reasonableness or unreasonableness is not the rule of interpretation.

It is the opinion of some, that the Scriptures were not infallibly revealed in the beginning; and that they have since been modified by art and man's device, until what is divine can be decided only by an appeal to reason. What is reasonable on each page is to be received, and what is unreasonable is to be rejected. The obvious meaning of the text, according to the established rules of expounding other books, is not to be regarded; but what is reasonable, what the text *ought* to say, is the rule of interpretation. Every passage must be tortured into a supposed conformity with reason; or, if too

incorrigible to be thus accommodated, must be expunged as an interpolation.

It is admitted that, without the aid of reason, the Bible could not be known to be the will of God, and could not be understood. Reason is the faculty by which we perceive and weigh the evidence of its inspiration, and by which we perceive and expound its meaning. Reason is the judge of evidence, whether the Bible be the word of God; but, that point decided, it is the judge of its meaning only according to the common rules of exposition. Deciding whether a law be reasonable or not, and deciding what the law is, are things entirely distinct; and the process of mind in each case is equally distinct; — the one is the business of the legislator, the other is the business of the judge. In *making* laws, their adaptation to public utility, their expediency, and equity, are the subjects of inquiry; and here the reasonableness or unreasonableness of a rule must decide whether it shall become a law or not. But when the judge on the bench is to *expound* this law, he has nothing to do with its policy, or utility, or justice. He may not look abroad to ascertain its adaptation to the public good, or admit evidence as to its effects; he is bound down rigidly to the duty of exposition. His eye is confined to the letter and the obvious meaning of the terms, according to the usages of language.

But what is meant by the terms *reasonable* and *unreasonable*, as the criterion of truth and falsehood? It cannot be what we should *naturally expect* God would do; for who, under the reign of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, would have expected a world like this,— a world full of sin and misery? It cannot be what is agreeable to our feelings or coincident with our wishes, for we are depraved; and the feelings of traitors may as well be the criterion of rectitude

concerning human government, as the feelings of the human heart respecting the divine.

The appropriate meaning of the term *reasonable*, in its application to the laws of God, is, the accordance of his laws and administration with what it is proper for God to do, in order to display his glory to created minds, and secure from everlasting to everlasting the greatest amount of created good.

But who, with finite mind and depraved heart, is competent to test the revealed laws and administration of Jehovah by this rule? In order to decide, upon this vast scale, whether the doctrines and duties of the Bible, and the facts it discloses of divine administration, are reasonable or not, the premises must be comprehended. God must be comprehended,— the treasures of his power, the depths of his wisdom, the infinity of his benevolence; his dominions must be comprehended; the greatest good must be known, and the most appropriate means for its attainment. All his plans,— the whole chain of causes and effects throughout the universe and through eternity, the effect of each alone and of all combined,— must lie open and naked to the inspection of reason. Reason must ascend the throne of God, and, from that high eminence, dart its vision through eternity, and pervade with steadfast view immensity, to decide whether the precepts and doctrines revealed in the Bible come in their proper place, and are *wise* and *good* in their connection with the whole; whether they will best illustrate the glory of God, and secure the greatest amount of created good in a government which is to endure forever. But is man competent to analyze such premises, to make such comparisons, to draw such conclusions? If God has not revealed intelligibly and infallibly the laws of his government below, man cannot supply the defect.

If holy men of old spake not as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, but as their own fallible understandings dictated, and if, since that time, the sacred page has been so corrupted that exposition, according to the ordinary import of language, fails to give the sense, then it cannot be disclosed; and the infidel is correct in his opinion that the light of nature is man's only guide. The laws of God are lost, the Bible is gone irrecoverably, until God himself shall give us a new edition, purified by his own scrutiny, and stamped by his own infallibility.

Apply these maxims, concerning the fallibility of revelation and the rule of interpretation, to the laws of this commonwealth. The wisdom of your ablest men has been concentrated in a code of laws: but these laws, though perfect in the conception of those who made them, were committed to writing by scribes incompetent to the duty of making an exact record; and the publication was intrusted, without superintendence, to incompetent workmen, who, by their blunders,— *honest, indeed*, but many and great,— defaced and marred the volume: to which add, that at each new edition, every criminal in the State had access to the press, and modified the types, to suit his sinister designs. What now is your civil code? You have none. The law is so blended with defect and corruption that no principles of legal exposition will extricate the truth. What, then, shall be done? Your wise men consult, and come to the profound conclusion that such parts only of the statute-book as are reasonable shall be received as law; that what is reasonable, each subject of the commonwealth, *being a reasonable creature*, must decide for himself; that the judges, in the dispensation of justice, shall first decide what the law ought to be, and thence what it is; and that such parts of the statute-book as by critical torture can-

not be conformed to these decisions shall be expunged, as the *errata* of the press, or the interpolation of fraud. And thus the book is purified, and every subject, and every judge, is invested with complete legislative power. Every man makes the law for himself, and regulates the statute-book by his own enactments.

But is this the state of God's government below? Is the statute-book of Jehovah annihilated, and every man constituted his own lawgiver? The man who is competent to decide, in this extended view, what is reasonable, and how, in relation to the interests of the universe, the Bible ought to be understood, is competent, without help from God, to make a Bible. His intelligence is commensurate with that of Jehovah; and, but for deficiency of power, he might sit upon the throne of the universe, and legislate and administer as well as he who now sits thereon. The mariner who can rectify his disordered compass by his intuitive knowledge of the polar direction need not first rectify his compass, and then obey its direction; he may throw it overboard, and without a luminary of heaven, amid storms and waves and darkness, may plough the ocean, guided only by the light within.

5. From the account given of the Scriptures as containing a system of moral laws, it appears that a mystery may be an object of faith, and a motive to obedience. The idea of a mystery in legislation has been treated with contempt; and the belief of a mystery has been pronounced impossible. No man, it is alleged, can be truly said to believe a proposition the terms of which he cannot comprehend. Hence has emanated the proud determination to subject every doctrine of revelation to the scrutiny of reason, and to believe nothing which exceeds the limits of individual comprehension.

Now, it is conceded that, in the *precept* of a law, mystery

can have no place; it must be definite and plain. It is also conceded that no man can believe a proposition the terms of which he does not comprehend. But the mysteries of revelation are not found among its precepts; and the proposition which is the precise object of faith is never unintelligible, but is always definite and plain.

A mystery is a *fact* whose general nature is, in some respects, declared intelligibly; but whose particular manner of existence is not declared, and cannot be comprehended. The proposition which declares the mystery has respect always to the general intelligible fact, and never to the unrevealed, incomprehensible mode of its existence. A mystery, then, is an intelligible fact, always involving unintelligible circumstances, which, of course, cannot be objects of faith, in any definite form.

Allow me to illustrate the subject by a few examples. God is omnipresent. This proposition announces a mystery. The general intelligible fact declared is, that there is no place where God is not; the mystery respects the particular manner in which the Divine Spirit pervades immensity. That the dead are raised, is an intelligible proposition; but "how are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come," are the attendant mysteries.—"It is raised a spiritual body." The intelligible proposition here is, that, at the resurrection, the materials of the natural body are reörganized in a manner wholly new, and better adapted to the exigencies of mind; but in *what manner* the spiritual body is organized, and how it differs from the natural body, are the attendant unexplained circumstances.

Take one more example,— the doctrine of the Trinity. The Scriptures reveal that there is but one God; they also reveal that, in the comprehensive substance of this self-existent being,

there are three real, divine persons, sustained and developed by the eternal essence, equal in their attributes and glory; and that, between these divine personalities, known by the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, exist intelligent social communion, mutual plans, and distinct official agencies in the work of redemption.

Now, the proposition that there is but one God, in the sense in which this is alleged, as having reference to the comprehensive self-existent substance of the divine being, and the proposition that there are three persons in this divine nature, of the same substance, equal in power and glory, are not contradictions; nor can either of them be shown to be an impossibility in the nature of things. For who can prove *a priori* that something must be self-existent, or what kind of self-existence it must be? much less, that it should be an infinite self-existent mind; and less still, that it must be a mind in exact accordance with the pattern of the human mind, — of one person only, — as the only possible mode in which the self-existent being can exist and develop himself.

Will it be alleged that, where the revealed personalities of the Godhead approach so nearly to absolute distinctness of personal independency, there can be no union which shall constitute them one God?

To know this, you must be omniscient, and comprehend the mode of the divine existence, and all possible modes of the existence of spirit. You must ascertain that there is but *one possible mode of intelligent existence*, and *that* the precise mode of unity which appertains to the mind of man. You must not only be unable to see *how* any other mode can be, but you must be able to prove that it *cannot* be. But are you competent to do this? How, then, do you undertake to decide that the Divine Spirit cannot exist in such a man-

ner as illustrates all that is declared of his unity as one God; and all that is implied in the distinction of names, and in the intellectual and social intercourse, stipulations, and distinct agencies recognized in the plan of redemption? The whole force of the objection against the resurrection of the body was, how decomposed matter could be reörganized in a different manner, and yet be the same body. The apostle's answer is, "Thou fool," cannot he who organized the body at first organize it again? And after all that heaven, and earth, and sea, have disclosed of his skill in the diversified organizations of matter, do you presume to say that the materials cannot be reörganized in a manner wholly new, and better adapted to the exigencies of spirit? And to every one who demands how the Supreme Eternal can in one sense be *One*, and in any other sense *Three*, the same answer may be given — "Thou fool," art thou omniscient? dost thou comprehend all possible and all actual modes of spiritual existence? Can there be no mind but after the exact pattern of human intellect; and dost thou see it, and canst thou prove it? Why, then, dost thou array thine ignorance against Omniscience, and exalt thy pride of reason above all that is called God? There is no alternative but to claim the infallibility of omniscience, and deny the possibility of any distinction in the manner of the divine existence which shall lay a foundation for the language employed in the Scriptures; or to take the ground that no fact can exist, or be proved to be a fact, whose *mode* of existence is incomprehensible, — a position which destroys the use of testimony and the possibility of faith. For the use of testimony is to establish the existence of facts, without reference to their mode of existence; but, according to this maxim, facts cannot be conceived to exist *in any form*, unless their specific *mode* of existence be also

comprehended. The *evidence* of their existence, therefore, is not testimony, but some intuitive comprehension of the *manner how* they exist; and the assent of the mind that they do exist, is not *faith*, but *intuition*. Apply the maxim, and it will blot out the universe; for who can comprehend the fact of eternal uncaused existence? The fact, then, is not to be admitted; and thus we set aside the divine existence. Or, if we admit a single mystery, and recognize the being of God, still we cannot take another step; for how can spirit create or move matter, or govern mind, and not destroy free agency? It is a mystery: therefore there *is* no created world, and no moral government. The sun, formed by chance, placed himself in the centre: and the surrounding orbs, self-moved, began their ceaseless course. But how can this be? It is a mystery: — and therefore there *is* no sun, and no revolving system. A mystery, then, may be an object of faith; for the proposition which is the precise object of faith is always intelligible, though always implying the existence of unintelligible circumstances.

Nor are mysteries useless in legislation, as motives to obedience. The divine omnipresence, though a mystery, is among the most powerful motives to circumspect conduct. And the resurrection of the body, and its mysterious change, are urged by the apostles as motives always to abound in the work of the Lord. The doctrine of the Trinity pours upon the world a flood of light. The peculiar mode of the divine existence lies at the foundation of the plan of redemption, as unfolded in the Bible; and brings to view, as a motive to obedience, an activity of benevolence on the part of God, a strength of compassion, a depth of condescension, and a profusion of mercy and grace in alliance with justice and truth, which no other exhibition of the mode of the divine existence can give.

It illustrates the riches of the goodness of God, and awakens that love which is the fulfilling of the law, and that repentance, and gratitude, and active obedience, which the goodness of God, thus manifested, could alone inspire.

6. If the Bible contains a system of divine laws, revealed and administered with reference to the salvation of man, then it is practicable to decide what are fundamental doctrines.

Those doctrines are fundamental which are essential to the influence of law as the means of moral government, and without which God does not ordinarily renew and sanctify the soul. The following have been usually denominated fundamental doctrines: — The being of God; the accountability of man; a future state of reward and punishment without end; and a particular providence taking cognizance of human conduct in reference to a future retribution. Are not these fundamental? Could the laws of God have any proper influence without them? Take away the lawgiver, or the accountability of the subject, or the cognizance of crimes by the judge, or future eternal punishment, and what influence would the Scriptures have as a code of laws? To allege that the remorse and natural evil attendant upon sinning are the adequate and only punishment of transgression, is most absurd. Do the natural evil and remorse attendant upon the transgression of human laws supersede the necessity of any other penalty? Is the impure desire suppressed, or intemperate thirst allayed, or covetousness dismayed, or the hand of violence arrested, by the appalling influence of remorse? It is a sanction always inadequate, which the frequency of crime diminishes, and the consummation of guilt annihilates.

The idea that gratitude will restrain, without fear of punishment, where the confidence of pardon precedes sanctification, is at war with common sense. Try the experiment.

Open your prison doors, and turn out your convicts, without coercion or fear of punishment, to illustrate the reforming influence of gratitude. The idea that future discipline for the good of the offender constitutes the only future suffering regards sin as a disease, instead of a crime; and hell as a merciful hospital, instead of a place of punishment. But how suffering in a prison, with convicts old in sin, shall work a reformation, no past analogy seems to show. Prisons have never been famed, in human government, for their reforming influence.

The *eternity* of future punishment, considering the invisibility and imagined distance of the retribution, and the stupidity and madness of man, is indispensable. If the *certain* fearful looking-for of fiery indignation *without end* exerts an influence too feeble to restrain from sin, the prospect of a *limited* salutary discipline will have, comparatively, no influence. Nor is eternal punishment unjust, or disproportionate to the crime. If the violation of the law in this world deserves punishment, it will no less deserve it, though the crime be perpetrated in another world; for probation and hope are not essential to free agency or accountability, and the incorrigible obstinacy of the rebel will not cancel the obligation of the law. *Endless wickedness will deserve, and will experience, endless punishment.* The deeds done in the body will determine the character, and shut out the hope of sanctification. But rebellion will hold on its course unsubdued by suffering, and will be *the meritorious cause of eternal punishment.*

The above truths are essential to the moral influence of legislation, generally. There are others, which are no less essential to the Gospel as a system of moral influence, for the restoration of man from sin to holiness. These are

indicated by the peculiar ends to be obtained by the Gospel. If overt action and continuance in well-doing were all, simple reward and punishment might suffice. But man is a sinner, — his heart is unholy, — and new affections are demanded. Those truths, then, are fundamental, without which the specific evangelical affections can have no being. To *fear*, the exhibition of danger is necessary; to *repentance*, the disclosure of guilt; to *humility*, of unworthiness; to *faith*, of guilt and helplessness on the part of man, and divine sufficiency and excellence on the part of the Saviour. There is a uniformity of action in the natural and moral world, from which the Most High does not depart; and which is the foundation of experimental knowledge, and teaches the adaptation of means to ends. Fire does not drown; and water does not burn; and fear is not excited by sentiments which exclude danger; nor repentance, by those which preclude guilt; nor affectionate confidence, by those which exclude dependence, or the reality of excellence in the object.

According to the nature of the human mind, the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement, the entire unholiness of the human heart, the necessity of a moral change by the special agency of the Holy Spirit, and justification by the merits of Christ through faith, are as essential to secure evangelical affections as fire to heat, or any natural cause to its appropriate effect. Conviction of the entire unholiness of the heart is necessary to beget just conceptions of guilt and danger; the necessity of a moral change by the agency of the Spirit, to extinguish self-righteous hopes, and occasion a sense of helplessness which shall render an Almighty Saviour necessary; the doctrine of the Trinity, as disclosing a Saviour, able to save, and altogether lovely; the doctrine of the atonement, to reconcile pardon with the moral influence of legis-

lation; and justification by faith instead of works, because justification by works cancels the penalty of law, blotting out past crimes by subsequent good deeds, giving the transgressor a license to sin with impunity to-day if he will obey to-morrow, provided his acts of obedience shall equal his acts of disobedience.

That these doctrines are fundamental, is evident from the violence with which they have always been assailed. The enemies of God know what most annoys them in his government; and the points assailed clearly indicate what is most essential. The whole diversified assault has always been directed against one or another of the doctrines which have been named in this discourse as fundamental; and has had for its object to set aside either the precept or the sanction of law, and reconcile transgression with impunity.

One denies the being of the Lawgiver; another discards the statute-book, as a forgery; a third subjects the laws of Jehovah to the censorship of reason, and adds, and expunges, till he can believe without humility, obey without self-denial, and disobey without fear of punishment; a fourth saves himself the trouble of criticism, by a catholic belief of *all* the Bible contains, without the *presumption or fatigue* of deciding what the precise meaning is; a fifth pleads the *coercion* of the decrees of God, and denies accountability, and hopes for impunity in sin. Some, however, deem it most expedient to explain away the *precept* of the law; and therefore they assert that to love the Lord our God does not imply any *sensible affection*, any complacency or emotion of the heart, but the rational religion of perception and intellectual admiration; and that by the *heart* is intended, not the heart, but the head. Others assail, with critical acumen, the *penalty* of the law. Punishment does not mean punishment, but the

greatest possible blessing which Almighty God in the riches of his grace can bestow, considering the omnipotence and perverseness of man's free agency; and eternal punishment means a number of years, more or less, of most merciful torment, as the disease shall prove more or less obstinate.

In like manner, the attributes of God are regarded in the abstract, dissociated from every idea of legislation and administration by reward or punishment. Goodness is good-nature, even to weakness; justice is bestowing on men *all the good* they deserve, without inflicting any punishment; and mercy is the indiscriminate pardon of those whom it would be malignant and unjust to condemn. The goodness of God as a lawgiver, promoting the happiness of his subjects by holy laws and an efficient administration of rewards and punishments, is kept out of view. His character of lawgiver is annihilated; and his glory as moral governor is shut out from the world, that man may sin without fear.

All representations of the character of man, at variance with the account of his entire depravity, have for their object the evasion, in some way, of the precept or penalty of law. One does it by pleading his inability to obey the law of God; and, while he continues in sin, takes his refuge from punishment in the justice of God. Another pleads not guilty, in manner and form as the Scriptures allege. He denies that coincidence of holiness in the heart with overt deeds is necessary to constitute obedience; and pleads his good actions in arrest of God's decision, that "there is none that doeth good, — no, not one;" and denies that the heart is desperately wicked. If it were true of *Adam* a short space, the promise of a Saviour made *his* heart *better*, and has made *all hearts* better: and, if not yet *very good*, they are so good as not to need a special change; so good, that attention to the con-

stituted forms of religion, duly administered, will, by God's blessing, without further care or perception of change, make them good enough; as, when the seed is sown, sun and rain cause vegetation and harvest, while the husbandman sleeps. No supreme and perceptible love to God is recognized as obligatory, no deep sense of guilt, no painful solicitude about futurity, no immediate repentance, and no faith, including holiness; but repentance and faith are deferred for the slow operation of forms, in making the sinner better by the unperceived grace of God. The Law with its high claims upon the heart, and the Gospel with its holy requisitions, are made to stand aloof; while the sinner, without holiness, by dilatory effort, prepares himself to repent; or, by lip-service and hypocrisy, prevails on the Most High to give him repentance unto life. The Law and Gospel are thrust aside, and the whole duty of man is epitomized in the short sentence, *Thou shalt sincerely use the means of grace as faithfully as thou art willing to use them; and, by the grace of God, through the merits of Christ, and thine own well-doing, thou shalt be saved.* In the same manner are the terms of pardon divested of holiness, to accommodate unholy hearts, reluctant to obey, and fearful of punishment. Faith is intellectual assent to revealed truth, without holiness, and too often without good works; or it is believing that one is pardoned when he is not, and *knows he is not*, in order that he may be pardoned. It is anything but the affectionate confidence of the heart in the Saviour, and the unconditional surrender of the soul to him. The rapid river, in its haste to the sea, is not more violent to sweep away obstructions, or evade them, than the heart of man to remove or evade the humbling demand of immediate love, repentance, and faith, as the terms of pardon.

But who are those that most bitterly inveigh against these doctrines which we regard as fundamental? Is it the most serious, the most devout, temperate, chaste, and circumspect class of men? Is it, judging from their lives according to the Bible, the righteous, or the wicked,—the church of God, or the world? For the righteous, according to the Scriptures, love the truth, and the wicked are opposed to it. Now, if we find the most holy men—the most sedate, prayerful, and exemplary people—leaguing against these fundamental doctrines, grieving at their prevalence, and trembling at their effect in revivals of religion, and praying to God with tears to check their prevalence,—we must abandon our confidence in these doctrines as the true system. But if the atheist, the deist, the profligate, the votary of pleasure, and the sons of violence and lies, regard them with a common and almost instinctive aversion, then we must cleave to them, as receiving from the world the distinctive evidence of their truth. They have always been charged with blasphemy, and with leading to licentiousness; and, if the charge be well founded, doubtless the blasphemer and the impure have always been their advocates. But what is the fact? Are the irreligious and profane, the licentious, the worldly, and the vain, the advocates for the doctrines of total depravity, regeneration by special grace, justification by faith, and eternal punishment? With scarce an exception, they have been open-mouthed and bitter in their opposition, reviling both these doctrines and those who preach them. From age to age, they have been the song of the drunkard, and the standing topic of profane cavil and vulgar abuse. If good men, through misapprehension, have sometimes seemed to be opposed to them, they have given evidence that the opposition was only a seeming one, while in reality their hearts were in sweet accordance with

them: though there are, it must be confessed, some whose moral conduct may not have been profligate, who have given unquestionable evidence that the feelings of their hearts, as to these doctrines, were in exact accordance with those of the blasphemer and the profligate. These conclusions concerning the doctrines which are fundamental are, however, controverted; we therefore appeal to a tribunal more infallible than our own judgment.

Those doctrines are fundamental, then, without whose instrumentality God does not renew and sanctify the hearts of men.

That man is unholy, and, without sanctification, unfit for heaven, is certain. That God is the agent, and truth the means of sanctification, is equally manifest; and the fact that some men do experience a change in their affections, both as to their moral nature and object, is as certain as any fact can be made by testimony. The witnesses testify to their own consciousness of such a change. Of this they are as competent judges as of anything appertaining to their own experience. The fact alleged is, that once they loved the world more than God; and that, from a given era, more or less determinate, they have regarded the Lord their God with an interest and affection wholly new in kind and superior in degree to their love for any other object; that they regard him with a good will, and complacency, and confidence, and gratitude, and joy, entirely unknown to them, until they became the subjects of this special change. The witnesses are an innumerable multitude. To the testimony of the three thousand renewed on the day of Pentecost, may be added the testimony of every intervening age, to this day; for there never was a time, even in the dark ages, when the doctrine of regeneration by the special agency of the Spirit was not

confirmed by the testimony of those who professed to have experienced this change.

The *capacity* of the witnesses for judging correctly allows nothing to be subtracted from the weight of their testimony; for it has not been the feebler sex only, and children, nor the poor and the ignorant merely, but *men*, aged, middle-aged, and young,—men of affluence, of refined manners, of strong powers of intellect, of cool judgment, of firm fibre and undaunted courage, of extended knowledge and cultivated taste, of antecedent moral and immoral habits,—who have united their testimony with multitudes of every other class of society, and with the poor Hottentot and Esquimaux, declaring that with them old things had passed away, and all things become new.

The *credibility* of the witnesses, as persons of veracity, would not be questioned on any other subject. To this we may add, that, before the alleged change, most of them conducted as if they did not love supremely the Lord their God; and afterwards, to their dying day, and in the hour of death, conducted, in many respects, in a manner inexplicable upon any other supposition than the reality of the alleged change. It is surprising that men, as philosophers, do not believe in the doctrine of regeneration, even though they had no confidence in the testimony of the Bible; for no fact in natural philosophy, no phenomenon of mind, is established by evidence more satisfactory in its nature, than that which establishes the reality of a change of heart. No fact was ever proved in a court of justice by a thousandth part of the evidence which concentrates the testimony of millions to the fact of the actual renovation of the heart.

But do not the professed subjects of this change oftentimes apostatize? Sometimes they do; but more than ninety in one

hundred do not apostatize. If the *apostasy* of ten be allowed in evidence against the reality of the change, the *perseverance* of ten balances the unfavorable evidence, and leaves the unimpeached testimony of eighty competent witnesses in favor of the reality of the change. Upon testimony thus circumstanced, what would be the decision in a court of justice?

But it is alleged by some that they have experienced all that appertains to this change of heart, and know it to be vain. That they may have experienced fear and trembling, such as the faith of devils inspires,—and that these fears may have been succeeded by composure and joy, such as the hope of the hypocrite affords,—may be admitted. But "what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord." What is the blade without root that withereth, to that which beareth fruit;—the plant which our heavenly Father has planted, to that which he taketh away because it is unfruitful;—the lamp without oil, that goeth out, to that which is replenished and shines with growing light to the perfect day? Is it incredible that a heart "deceitful above all things" should be deceived, or that a heart "desperately wicked" should find no abiding pleasure in a religion which it *professed*, but did not *feel?* "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for, if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us." It is not a new thing to resist the Holy Ghost; nor an impossible thing, nor, we fear, a rare event, by stigmatizing the work of the Spirit, to commit a sin which shall never be forgiven. May God grant that the lightness with which some men treat their past convictions of sin and fears of punishment do not prove, at last, the too sure indications of that hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, to which, in his most tremendous displeasure, the blasphemed Spirit gives up the incorrigible sinner.

This moral change, then,—*an indubitable fact, and indispensable to salvation*,—is, according to the Scriptures, accomplished by the power of God giving efficacy to *truth*. Men are begotten again by the *Gospel*, born of incorruptible seed which is the *word of God*, and sanctified by the truth. These blessed operations of the Spirit are experienced sometimes in solitary instances, like single drops of rain in a land of drought; and sometimes multitudes, almost cotemporaneously, become the subjects, first, of solicitude and the consciousness of guilt, and afterwards of love, joy, and peace.

But it is also a matter of fact, and a tremendous fact it is, that, so far as these glorious displays of the renovating grace of God are accomplished by the instrumentality of preaching, they are confined to the exhibitions of these doctrines which we have enumerated as fundamental. Where these are faithfully preached, the arm of the Lord is not *always* revealed in revivals of religion; though, in that case, few ministers spend their days without cheering interpositions of divine grace, giving seals to their ministry. But where the doctrines of the Trinity, the entire unholiness of man, the necessity of regeneration by special grace, the atonement, justification by faith, and future eternal punishment, are not preached, or are denounced and ridiculed, there the phenomena of revivals of religion never exist, and solitary instances of regeneration are comparatively unknown; and where they do exist, they are regarded as the effect of delusion, or as proofs of a disordered intellect, rather than as indications of a merciful divine interposition. The fact is unquestionable, and the statement of it is not invidious, because it is a subject of exultation on the part of those unhappy ministers who discard the above doctrines, and whose people are the subjects of this melancholy exemption from the convincing and renewing operations of the

Holy Spirit. In such places, the light does not even shine into darkness; but all is as the valley of the shadow of death. No jubilee trumpet is heard, announcing a release from the bondage of corruption, and calling the slaves of sin into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Such places are not the hill of Zion, upon which descend the rain and the dew of heaven; but they are the mountains of Gilboa, upon which there is no rain, neither any dew. They are the valley of vision, in which the bones are very many and very dry, and no voice is heard proclaiming, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord;" and no prayer is made, "Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." No voice announces a spiritual resurrection; and no influence from above begins it. All is silent as the grave, and motionless as death.

7. If the Scriptures contain a system of divine laws, then the doctrine of the entire depravity of man is not inconsistent with free agency and accountability; for depravity is the voluntary transgression of the law, and the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" and entire depravity is the constant refusal to love, in this manner, the Lord our God. It implies, not that men's hearts have no kind sympathies, no social affections, or that these are sinful, or that their actions are all contrary to rule; but only, that they have no holiness, no supreme love to God, and, therefore, do not with the heart obey, but do with the heart voluntarily and constantly disobey, the law. The principle assumed in the objection is, that if men will with the heart obey the law of God in part, then they are free agents, and blamable for not obeying perfectly; but if they violate the law wilfully and wholly, so as not to love at all, then they are not to blame. If a man regulates his temper according

to the Gospel, one day, and, the next, indulges malignant dispositions, he is a free agent, and liable to punishment; but if he exercise no right affections, and every imagination of his heart be only evil, then the wrath of Heaven must sleep, for the man has become *too wicked to be the subject of blame.* If a subject violate one-half the laws of the land, he may be justly punished; but if he should press on and tread them all under foot, his accountability expires, and he may bid defiance to retribution.

8. The view we have taken of the Scriptures as containing a system of divine laws illustrates the obligation to believe correctly and cordially the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, and the criminality of error on these subjects.

It is a favorite maxim of some, that men are not accountable for their opinions with respect to the doctrines of revelation, because there is no specific command that this or that doctrine shall be believed — because they are so obscurely revealed that no blame can attach to the misunderstanding of them — because no one doctrine is absolutely indispensable to salvation — because the doctrines of the Bible are subjects of mere theoretical speculation, of no practical influence — and because belief and disbelief are not voluntary, but the mechanical and unavoidable result of evidence, or want of evidence.

It is admitted that there is no specific and formal command, that the doctrine of the Trinity, or total depravity, or regeneration by special grace, or justification by faith, or eternal future punishment, shall be believed: for these come under the head of motives; and who ever heard of a special enactment requiring subjects to believe the declarations of a lawgiver, with respect to the motives to obedience? The obligation to understand and believe the doctrines of the

Bible is involved in the nature of the Bible as a book of law. The subjects of Jehovah are bound to understand the laws of his government under which they live, and to believe his declarations, without a special enactment and a subjoined penalty. They are bound to understand the character of God, the great object of religious affection, and foundation of moral obligation; and to act with such a temper, and under the influence of such motives, as God has required. But a law is never understood whose *precepts* only are recognized, and whose *sanctions* are unknown. The character of God is not correctly and adequately disclosed merely by the precepts of his law; and the motives to obedience, and the principles of holy action, are found nowhere but in the doctrines of revelation. If men, as accountable creatures, are bound to act as God commands, they are bound to understand those doctrines which disclose the principles and motives of action; and this, the Scriptures, in general terms, do command expressly and often. The command is reiterated in various forms *to know the truth*, a term comprehending the whole revealed system: *to love the truth*,—not a part, but the whole truth, which is the Word of God: and *to obey the truth*, which is, to believe what God has revealed, and to do what God has commanded, with the temper, and under the influence of the motives, which he has disclosed as principles of holy action.

To say that the doctrines of the Bible are so obscurely revealed as to supersede the possibility and the obligation of understanding them, is blasphemy. It is ascribing to Jehovah folly, or injustice, or both. It is annihilating the Bible as a system of moral law; for precepts, without intelligible sanctions, are not moral government. Government lies in the motives revealed; and, if these cannot be understood, they

are not revealed, and God does not administer a moral government, except by the feeble impulse of the light of nature: — and thus we land in infidelity.

The maxim that no one doctrine of the Bible is absolutely indispensable to salvation, and the inference thence drawn, that truth is useless and error innocent, is a sophism. It is drawing general conclusions from particular premises. For, suppose that the denial of any *one* doctrine, *all the rest* being cordially believed, would not exile the soul from heaven; does it follow that the disbelief and rejection *of the whole system* would not be fatal? What if it be true that no one kind of nutriment is absolutely indispensable to human life; does it thence follow that all nutrition may be safely dispensed with? What if no one poison be so active but that a very little may be received into the system consistently with life; does it thence follow that poisons are harmless, are nutritious, and may be safely employed as a substitute for bread? The fact is, that those who discard the doctrine of the Trinity discard, usually, every other fundamental doctrine. Their system is not merely different from, but opposite to, that denominated orthodox: so that, if one be true, the other is false; if one be "sincere milk," the other is poison. Nor does it follow that, provided a *real Christian* might, without believing some particular doctrine, *possibly* attain to heaven, he could therefore dispense with it without injury. *Much less* does it follow that, because a *Christian* may not be absolutely destroyed by some erroneous opinion, *an impenitent sinner* may safely adopt it. An error which may not suffice to *destroy* spiritual life in a *believer* may be decisive to prevent the *commencement of it* in the heart of an *impenitent sinner*. Thousands may die an eternal death by

the influence of an error, under the operation of which a Christian may possibly drag out a meagre spiritual existence.

The opinion that the doctrines of revelation are matters of mere speculation, or of trivial practical influence, is a position at variance with the principles of law, with the constitution of the human mind, and with universal fact. It is not true of the principles of natural science, that they are mere matters of speculation, and of no practical influence on man. It is the practical influence of the sciences which constitutes their utility. They exert a powerful influence in the formation of the human character, and the regulation of human conduct. The whole course of the daily business of the world moves on by the illumination and potent energy of the sciences. Much less is it a fact, that truth contained in moral laws has no influence. It is here that the kind of truth is precisely that which is most adapted to move free agents; and comes to the understanding, and conscience, and heart, with a designed concentration of influence surpassing all other influence but that of direct physical impulse. The whole motive in legislation lies in the sanctions of law; and these have their influence through the medium of opinion. *The motive to obedience is as the opinion concerning it is:* if that be correct, the true motive is presented to the mind; if incorrect, the true motive is thrust aside, and another substituted. To say that the doctrines of the Bible, embodying and presenting to the mind of man that moral influence by which God governs him as a free agent and an accountable creature, are mere abstract speculations, of no moral influence or practical effect, is charging God with incompetency in legislation; and disrobing him of his character of moral governor; and destroying the accountability of man; and blotting out the light of the glory of God, as it

would otherwise be displayed in his works of providence and grace. But upon what authority is it alleged that the doctrines of the Bible have no practical influence? Does opinion, in human governments, concerning the lawgiver and the sanctions of law, exert no influence upon the character and conduct of man? Why, then, should the laws and sanctions of the government of Jehovah exert no influence, so that believing or not believing its fundamental truths shall have no effect? Doctrines in religion do exert a powerful influence. Have the doctrines of the Koran proved themselves idle theories, of no practical influence; or the doctrines of paganism, or the doctrines of popery? Have the doctrines of Calvin and Arminius no effect, or precisely the same effect? Why, then, oppose the one, and eulogize the other, when both are equally good or equally useless?

No truth in legislation, human or divine, is merely speculative, however it may appear such. What can be, apparently, more entirely speculative than the opinion of the Gnostics, *that all moral impurity lies in matter.* But from this opinion, as a fountain, flowed the denial of the human nature and death of Christ, and of the resurrection of the body, the doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy, of penance and purgatory, and the host of cruelties and fooleries which have taxed and tormented the world. Travel over benighted Asia, and witness the operation of the same opinion in the ablutions of the Ganges, and the self-inflicted torture of devotees to subdue the sin which is in matter, and render the spirit pure and acceptable to the gods. That Mahomet is the true prophet, is a speculative opinion; but it has carried fire and sword in its course, and ruled the nations with a rod of iron, and dashed them in pieces as a potter's vessel. That the Pope is the successor of Peter, and universal and infallible

bishop, is a matter of mere opinion; but it is an opinion which has immured the nations of Europe in a dungeon, and bound them in chains, and almost extinguished the human intellect. That there is no God, that the end sanctifies the means, and that death is an eternal sleep, are mere opinions; but fire, and blood, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, have attended their march over desolated Europe. Considering man as a mere animal, the atheists of the French revolution destroyed his life with as little ceremony as they would crush an insect. The fact is, that among moral agents opinions respecting law and the sanctions of law are principles of action; and no great aberration from rectitude in practice can be named, with respect to public bodies or individuals, which is not caused or justified by some false opinion.

The opinion that belief and disbelief are mechanical, to the exclusion of all influence of the heart, of interest, passion, and prejudice, is the consummation of folly. Evidence may be so powerful as to render incredulity impossible; and so feeble as to render belief impossible. But an entire temperate zone lies between these two extremes, in which inclination and aversion, passion and prejudice, exert as decisive an influence upon the understanding as evidence itself. If not, whence the maxim, that no man may judge in his own cause? Is it because all men are dishonest; or is it because interest is known to pervert the judgment even of honest men? Whence all the unmeaning talk about sincerity, and prejudice, and candor? Who ever heard of a sincere, unprejudiced, candid pair of balances? If the mind decides by scruples and grains of evidence, as the scales are balanced by weights, why may not the honest judge decide in his own cause? Can interest vary the weights in the balance? How can he help himself, though the weight of evidence should be

against his interest? The fact is notorious, that inclination possesses a powerful influence over the judgment. Examination may be neglected on one side, and pushed on the other. The evidence in favor of our choice may be dwelt upon, and the eye be turned away from that which would prove an unpleasant fact. It is practicable to suspend a decision, to resist conviction, to pervert arguments which prove unwelcome truths, and even to forget them; and to treasure up for use those which favor conclusions which we love. The demonstrations of Euclid, if their result had been the doctrine of the Trinity, the total depravity of man, the necessity of regeneration, and future eternal punishments, would have produced as much diversity of opinion, and brought upon his positions as much contempt, and upon his book as much critical violence, as has been experienced by the Bible.

Erroneous opinions are criminal, because they falsify the divine character, and destroy the moral influence of the divine law; because they are always voluntary, the result of criminal negligence to obtain correct knowledge, or of a criminal resistance of evidence, or perversion of the understanding through the depravity of the heart; and because the belief of error is always associated with moral and criminal affections. It is never a mere act of the understanding; the *heart* decides, and is never neutral. If a truth be rejected, it is also *hated;* if an error be embraced, it is also *loved.* It is because men have no *pleasure* in the truth, but have *pleasure* in unrighteousness, that they are given over to believe a lie; and are punished, for believing it, with everlasting destruction. The propagation of error is criminal, of course, because it is destructive to the souls of men; annihilating the influence of the divine moral government, and the means

by which God is accustomed to renew the soul, and without which he does not ordinarily exert his sanctifying power.

9. In the view of what has been said, how momentous is the responsibility of ministers of the Gospel; and how aggravated the destruction of those who keep back the truth, or inculcate falsehood! It is as if a man, not content with his own destruction by famine, should extend the desolation, by withholding nutrition from all around him; or, not content with poisoning himself, should cast poison into all the fountains, putting in motion around him the waters of death. If there be a place, in the world of despair, of ten-fold darkness, where the wrath of the Almighty glows with augmented fury, and whence, through eternity, are heard the loudest wailings, ascending with the smoke of their torment,—in that place I shall expect to dwell, and there, my brethren, to lift up my cry with yours, should we believe lies, and propagate deceits, and avert from our people the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. And if there be a class of men upon whom the fiercest malignity of the damned will be turned, and upon whose heads universal imprecations will mingle with the wrath of the Lamb, it will doubtless, my brethren, be ourselves, if, as blind guides, we lead to perdition our deluded hearers.

The present occasion requires that a more particular application of this discourse be made to the pastor elect, and to the missionaries who are about to be ordained to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles.

My Dear Brother:

With the consequences of unfaithfulness in view, you are about to take the pastoral care of this church and congregation. Their salvation, according to the laws of the human

mind, and the constituted mode of divine operation, is to be promoted or hindered by the instructions which you give, and the pastoral duties which you perform or neglect. But be not dismayed. The reward of fidelity is as glorious as the punishment of treachery is dreadful; and with the Bible in your hand, and Jesus Christ with you always, you are thoroughly furnished, and can do all things. Your duty is plain. It is to explain and enforce the laws of the divine moral government, contained in the Bible. Receive, then, my brother, that holy book with implicit confidence, as including your commission, and all you have to say. Read it daily as a part of your devotion, and study it as a part of your profession. But remember that yours is the office of an expositor of that divine book, and not of a legislator, to revise and modify its sacred pages. Be not wise in your own conceit; and dare not to be wise above what is written. Bring to your aid, for the exposition of the Scriptures, the resources of human learning; but bring with these a heart humbled with a sense of its own deceitfulness and depravity, and filled with strong desires, and groanings that cannot be uttered, for the illumination and guidance of the Spirit; remembering that ignorance and unsanctified knowledge alike puff up, and subject to condemnation.

That you may understand the Scriptures, examine them for yourself. Receive no opinions upon trust; and allow no man to dictate what you shall believe. But do not use this your liberty as a cloak for rejecting the truth, and adopting licentious opinions. Dare to think for yourself; and what you think, *dare to preach;* knowing that divine wisdom has revealed no superfluous truths, and that all Scripture is profitable.

Dare to think for yourself; but do not imagine that inde-

pendence can compensate for indolence, or ignorance, or heresy, or hatred of the truth; or that, to be independent, you must, of course, despise antiquity, and differ from the vast majority of the wise, and great, and good.

Dare to think for yourself. Let no creed bind you because it is reputed orthodox, until you perceive its agreement with the Scriptures. But, then, though everywhere spoken against, adopt it; remembering that the Bible may be epitomized and its meaning retained, and your reverence for creeds be only reverence for the Bible.

Dare to think for yourself; and do not imagine that the faithful avowal of truths to which the hearts of men are opposed demands less courage than the promulgation of errors grateful to the feelings of human depravity.

Dare to think for yourself; but give to others the same liberty; and never raise the pusillanimous cry of intolerance, because others will not think your opinions to be harmless, or as correct and salutary as their own.

Explain to your people the moral law, as demanding love to God with all the heart; and their entire depravity, as destitute of this holy love; and their danger, as exposed justly to eternal punishment. Explain to them the nature of repentance, as the sorrow for sin which is inspired by love to God; and the nature of faith, as that confidence in the Saviour which is the result of holy love. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, and the love of Christ, set before them the sorer punishment of which he shall be thought worthy who shall tread under foot the Son of God. When you have explained to your people the great duties of holy love, repentance for sin, and faith in the Redeemer, and have set before them the motives which God has revealed, urge them, with all possible importunity, to an immediate compliance. Address them

as free agents, without excuse for the least deviation from the perfect law of God, or for one moment's delay of repentance and faith. By the terrors of the Lord exhort, and by the mercies of God entreat, them instantly to be reconciled to God. Say unto them, with reiterated importunity, "Thus saith the Lord," whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; and wash your hands of their blood, and throw on them the tremendous responsibility of self-destruction, if they will die.

Admit no excuse for impenitence, and no plea in mitigation of guilt: no decree of God as having any influence to constrain them to sin, or render immediate repentance impossible: no doctrine of election or reprobation as excluding them from heaven against their wills, and driving them reluctantly to hell: no doctrine of total depravity as destroying free agency, and rendering transgression involuntary and unavoidable: no doctrine of regeneration by the special agency of the Holy Spirit as implying any inability in the sinner to love, and repent, and believe, which does not consist wholly in his refusal to obey the Most High. The Searcher of hearts perceives in these doctrines no reason for modifying his demands of perfect, immediate, and constant obedience, or for mitigating in any degree the penalty of disobedience, or for relaxing the peremptoriness of command, or the earnestness of entreaty.

But, my brother, whatever may be your attainments in human science, your might in the Scriptures, your popularity as a preacher, or your estimation in the affections of your people, let it all be counted loss, in comparison with their actual conversion to God. Set your heart upon the great blessing of a revival of religion. Desire it speedily and constantly. Pray for it without ceasing, and stir up the mem-

bers of your church to concentrate on this point the whole importunity of the prayer of faith. And live, and preach, and pray, and act, in such a manner as shall lay the best foundation to expect the blessing.

My Beloved Brethren:

If the Bible contains the laws of the Most High God for the restoration of man from sin to holiness, then it is not a superfluous labor to translate the Scriptures into the various languages of the nations, nor a superfluous charity to send missionaries to preach the Gospel to the heathen.

There are not a few who seem to regard the heathen as not accountable for their depravity of heart, nor criminal for their idolatry, and scarcely for their immoralities; nor as subjected to inconvenience by their superstitions. They are the guileless children of our common Father, all affectionately striving to please him,— in ways, different, indeed, from those of Christian worship, but equally sincere, and equally well pleasing to God, and equally benign in their influence to make men happy on earth, and to prepare them for heaven. What need, then, of all this sympathy for the heathen, and of so much exertion and expense to relieve those whose circumstances, for time and eternity, are as eligible as ours? Why should their reverence for the religion of their ancestors be weakened, and their "elegant mythology" be stigmatized, and the Gospel be thrust into its place? Is not God merciful? Let Him, then, take care of the heathen.*

But whence are derived these conceptions of the moral

* "I would not lift a finger," said an infidel philosopher, "to convert to Christianity the whole Chinese empire." This in him was consistent. But what shall be thought of those who profess to be Christians who will not lift a finger in the great effort now making to evangelize the world?

character and condition of the heathen? Not from the Bible: they are there all recognized as depraved; all under condemnation for their depravity of heart, and abominable deeds; all condemned for their idolatry, as the consummation both of folly and guilt,—the result not of filial affection for God, but of enmity against him, and of a reprobate mind, to which God has given them up, because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them; and they are represented as needing the Saviour, the Bible, the Sabbath, and the preaching of the Gospel, for the same purpose, and in the same degree, that we need them. If the Gospel would be no blessing to them, it is none to us. If their superstitions are as salutary to them in their moral influence, as the Gospel would be, they would be as great a blessing to us as the Gospel is.

Make the exchange, then, ye who profess such charity and philanthropy towards the heathen. Give them your Bibles, and pastors, and Sabbaths; and receive their idols, and bramins, and religious rites. Demolish the temples of Jehovah; and roll through your streets the car of Juggernaut, "besmeared with blood of human sacrifice," and covered with emblems of pollution. Put out the Sun of Righteousness, and bring back the darkness visible. Kindle up the fires that shall consume annually, in a circumference of thirty miles, two hundred and seventy-five widows on the dead bodies of their husbands, and leave behind thousands of children, doubly orphans. Welcome to your shores the religion which shall teach your children, when you are sick, to lay you down by the cold river side to die; and when their mothers shall shrink from the glowing flame, with their own hands to thrust them in. Welcome to your hearts a religion

which shall teach you to entice your smiling children to the waves, and plunge them in, to attract by their cries the sympathy of strangers, or to perish and become the food of alligators. Welcome to your hearts a religion which, if sin shall annoy, and the fear of punishment invade, will send you to drink of the waters that lave your shores, and to wash in their flood, as your most effectual remedy. Fill your houses with Indian gods, of brass, and wood, and stone; and blow the trumpet of jubilee at your emancipation from the Gospel; and shout before your idols, "These be thy gods, O Israel!"

Oh, what superfluous benevolence has the Father manifested, in giving his Son to die for those whom the blood of bulls and of goats might have saved, as well as the blood of Jesus! What mere enthusiasm has actuated prophets and apostles, in their efforts to transmit to other ages a book so useless as the Bible, and institutions no better than the horrid rites of pagan worship! When Jesus gave to the inspired band their high commission, "Go ye out into all the earth, and preach the Gospel to every creature," why did they not perceive the mistaken zeal of their Master, and announce, in anticipation of the discovery of latter days, that the heathen are holy enough without the Bible and the foolishness of preaching, and save ages of toil, and rivers of blood? But the heathen are not holy. Read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and behold a portrait drawn by the pen of inspiration. "Filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." This

is the result of that heathen mythology, so "elegant;" and these are those children of our common Father, so sincere in their efforts to please him, and so pure as not to need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb! Read the account of BUCHANAN, and you will perceive that the drawing is, still, to the life. No pollution is washed away, no stain of blood effaced, and no ray of light has fallen upon the canvas to alleviate the gloom. Read your Bible, and you will perceive that no change for the better is ever to be expected, but from the diffusion of the Bible, and the preaching of the Gospel.

My dear brethren, the heathen are neither holy nor happy. They are depraved, and must be born again. They are ignorant, and must be instructed. They are profligate, and must be reclaimed. They are debased by their superstitions, and must be raised. They are tortured by vain fears and useless penances, and must be relieved. The stern-hearted god of this world rules them with an excruciating despotism; and their groans, disregarded for ages, have, at length, reached the heavens; and the voice of the Almighty has come down from above, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and you, brethren, have answered, "*Here are we,— send us.*" God has accepted your offer; and you are this day to be set apart, to carry the Bible and to preach the Gospel to the heathen. It is a great, but it is also a glorious work; and you are not alone. God is with you,— Jesus Christ is with you,— the Holy Spirit is with you,— the hearts of all the pious are with you,— our substance we pledge for your support; and our prayers, day and night, for your protection and comfort, and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the heathen, to whom you shall preach the Gospel.

May the prayer-hearing God bear you in safety across the deep; open before you, in heathen lands, an effectual door; make you the blessed instruments of raising to the fellowship of angels and justified spirits thousands who otherwise had died in their sins, and been wretched and miserable forever; and, after a long life, bestow upon you in heaven "joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

SERMON VI.

THE DESIGN, RIGHTS AND DUTIES, OF LOCAL CHURCHES.

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.

It has pleased God to carry into effect his purpose of redeeming men, by the instrumentality of a visible society organized exclusively for that end. This society, commencing its operations soon after the Fall, and extending them through every intervening age, and destined to labor in the sacred cause till the last day, has been denominated the Church of God. It is, in the text, called a house, as embodying in one family the children of God, and as the seat of their social labors, protection, and enjoyment. By a change of figure, it is denominated the pillar and ground of the truth; to denote, doubtless, the actual efficacy of the church in upholding, from age to age, the cause of God.

The first form of the church appears to have been patriarchal, in adaptation to the most simple state of human society, as existing in tribes, originating in a common ancestor, and united by ties of blood, and mutual interests and dangers. In the church thus organized, the common ancestor was the priest, to instruct his descendants and uphold the divine worship. The life of the patriarch, extending in the

first ages to nearly a thousand years, rendered a written revelation less important, and gave to his precepts and example authority for the maintenance of truth, and the instituted worship of God.

The next form of the visible church was one which was accommodated to the exigencies of a nation. The progress of society from the pastoral to the agricultural and commercial state amalgamated tribes, and constituted nations. By these changes, and the reduction of human life to a hundred and twenty years, the efficacy of patriarchal instruction and authority was destroyed; and families, having no common head, were scattered abroad, and soon exchanged the knowledge and worship of the true God for the fictions and impurities of idolatry.

To defend the church, in this condition, against violence and the seductions of idolatry, her secular and spiritual interests were united, under the immediate administration of God himself, with the sanctions of special providential prosperity, or special judgments, as she should maintain or abandon his worship. To the church of God, thus organized, was given a territory, to be held upon the condition of constancy in the maintenance of the true worship; and, to aid the church in her work, a written revelation was committed to her care, and forms of worship were prescribed. When the temporary purpose of this dispensation was answered, in the preservation of religion until the Desire of nations had come, and, by the offering of himself, had made propitiation for sin,— then, that he might give to his atonement a more extended operation in the salvation of man, the external form of the church was again changed, in accommodation to the exigencies of the world. This was done by requiring, in all nations, individuals possessing the requisite qualifications to associate under

the laws of Christ, for the advancement of the great designs of his kingdom. Wherever, therefore, a number of individuals, possessing the required qualifications, associate to maintain the ordinances of the Gospel, they become *a society incorporated by the God of heaven, with specific chartered privileges.* This is the foundation of local churches. The rights of these local associations include the election of their own officers, and the framing of their own articles of faith, and the ordering of their own worship and discipline, according to their conceptions of the Word of God. The organization is such as may embody, and ultimately will embody, the population of the world.

It will be the object of this discourse to illustrate

THE DESIGNS OF THE MOST HIGH IN THE ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL CHURCHES, AND THE REQUISITE QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP.

One obvious design of local churches is the consummation of holiness in believers, and their preparation for heaven. Christians are imperfect; and if, in a moment, it were possible to efface every stain of sin, it pleases God to accomplish the work progressively, by the interposition of moral influence. The church is the society in which this influence is to be exerted, — the school of instruction and discipline, where the light of truth is to shine, restraint to operate, impressions on the heart to be made, and the prayers, and praises, and confessions of the saints to be offered; and there is to be enjoyed the mutual fellowship, watchfulness, exhortation, and aid; and there the Lord commandeth his blessing, even life forevermore. In accordance with this primary design of the church, apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, are said to be given for the perfecting of the saints,— for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Local churches are designed, also, to secure the purity and perpetuity of revealed truth. The propensity of man to change the truth of God into a lie is notorious. To counteract this determination of a rebel world to forget God, the reiterated miraculous interposition of Heaven has been steadily required, until the sacred canon was completed. When that event was accomplished, the lively oracles were committed to the church, with the responsibility of contending earnestly for the doctrines, precepts, and ordinances, contained in them. It is in reference to the agency of the church in maintaining the doctrines and moral influence of the Bible, that she is called the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and the pillar and ground of the truth.

Local churches are organized, also, for the preservation of the Sabbath, and the maintenance of the public worship of God. It is not enough, to secure the salvation of man, that truth is revealed, and continued from age to age, in the Bible and in the church. To be made effectual, it must be communicated; and, for this purpose, a system of moral administration must lend its instrumentality. But, in a world lying in wickedness, the besetting influence of sloth, the temporizings of fear, the cravings of avarice, and the repellencies of a heart averse from God, will prevent the spontaneous formation of any abiding measures for the religious instruction of mankind, or even for the preservation of that system which God has established. The tide of worldliness, unobstructed, would roll over the Sabbath-day, and extinguish the fire upon the altar of God. To churches, therefore, is committed the work of preserving the Sabbath, and of perpetuating the worship of God; — not by physical power, but by that moral influence which the word and institutions of Heaven, sustained

by the church, exert upon the consciences of men, and upon the laws and habits of civil society.

Another design of Heaven, in the organization of local churches, is, by means of an efficient system of religious instruction, to secure the continued existence of these religious corporations themselves, for the benefit of the rising generation. If the God of mercy intended the salvation of but one generation of men, no prospective arrangements for the salvation of succeeding generations would be needed; but, as the work of redemption is to be continued, the appropriate means must be transmitted. The pious of one generation pass off the stage in about thirty years. In that short period, were no precautionary measures employed to prevent, the cause of God might become extinct. The church, however, will live; the gates of death will not prevail: but it will be continued as seed time and harvest are continued, by enterprise appropriate for that purpose. This enterprise is to be directed especially to the education of the children of the church, and of such others as are voluntarily committed to her care. To every church is committed the superintendence of that education of children upon which her continued existence depends. As fellow-workers with God, the members of every local church are bound to raise up another generation of believers to serve him when they are dead; and no church has answered the end of her existence, which does not accomplish this. Nor is this all; she is bound to make aggression on Satan's territory, and be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

But, to uphold the worship of God, and to lead in the great work of religious education, professional instructors are required, qualified by their piety and knowledge, and devoted exclusively to their work. In secular concerns, the demand of

any article in the market will produce a supply; but it is not so in relation to competent instructors in religion. If none were intrusted with the work of rearing up ministers for the sanctuary, and no forethought were exercised, and no systematized exertion brought into steady operation, the wastes of death and the demands of an accumulating population could not be supplied; churches would mourn the bereavement of pastors without a prospect of having their loss repaired, and the regions of the shadow of death would every year become more extended, dark, and hopeless. The public instruction, by means of which the church of God has hitherto been continued has not been the result of a common course of nature, but rather of the deliberate prospective labors of the church herself for that end. The Jewish church supported one tribe out of twelve, which was consecrated to the purposes of her religion, and in this tribe maintained her schools of the prophets. The primitive churches regarded it as a primary object of their organization to thrust laborers into the vineyard; and as soon as they obtained a settled rest, reared institutions for the education of pious youth for the ministry. All the seminaries of modern Europe were founded with a primary reference to the preparation of men for the ministry. And scarcely had the fathers of New England escaped the edge of the sword in this new world, before, anticipating the wants of future ages, they laid the foundations of literary institutions, to provide pastors for the church of God. Every college in New England, and nearly every one in the United States, was founded in anticipation of the future wants of the church, and with a view to supply them, by rearing up qualified instructors. To local churches is committed still the work of providing religious instructors for succeeding generations, and for the world. Every church is an education society,

organized by the God of heaven expressly for the purpose of providing an evangelical ministry. It may be proper for churches, by formal resolutions, to recognize neglected obligation; but it does not depend on the vote of a church, whether it shall be her duty or not to coöperate with other churches, in providing an able ministry for the perfecting of the saints, and the conversion of the world. GOD HAS MADE IT HER DUTY; AND THE VOWS OF GOD ARE IN THIS RESPECT UPON EVERY CHURCH.

But the whole earth is destined to experience the illumination of the Gospel. The means to be employed, for this purpose are, the translation and dissemination of the Bible, the preaching of the Gospel, the planting of churches, and the establishment of schools, among the heathen. The work is great, and, without the guidance and energy of permanently organized bodies, cannot be done: but it *is in the hands of permanently organized bodies; God has committed it to local churches, who are missionary societies, to be continued from age to age, to urge on the work of evangelizing the world.* The primitive churches understood the duties of their calling, in accordance with these views of the subject; and did, through every vicissitude of poverty and distress, make vigorous exertions to propagate the Gospel. The Protestant churches, environed by the Papists, and in strenuous conflict for existence, could have but little time or strength for a more distant warfare. Awaking also in a world without form and void, they had enough to do to reduce the chaos to order, and to fill the space with Bibles and pastors, expositions and Christian literature. They made exertions at home unparalleled since the apostolic age. But even they, under the patronage of the high admiral of France, sent five ships to the Brazils with missionaries and supplies, to estab-

lish in South America the Protestant religion. The enterprise failed; but they evinced their sense of obligation, and have doubtless reaped in heaven their reward. It is only to be added, that churches of all denominations at this day are beginning to perceive their duty, and to place themselves in a posture of readiness to perform it.

The requisite qualifications for membership in a church of Christ, the next subject of consideration, are *personal holiness in the sight of God, and a credible profession of holiness before men.*

This is clearly indicated by the design of the church. Is the church organized to consummate the work of righteousness in the hearts of believers, to maintain the purity and secure the perpetuity of truth, to rescue the Sabbath from profanation and the worship of God from extinction, to guarantee her own continued existence by an efficient system of religious education, and to bless future ages, by providing pastors, and missionaries, and Bibles, till the earth is full of the knowledge of God? Can there be any doubt to what description of persons this work has been committed? The Scriptures recognize but two classes of men, distinguished by the state of their hearts with respect to God, his law and Gospel, and providential government: the one denominated the friends of God, the other alienated from him; the one holy, the other unholy; the one righteous, the other wicked. All men are included under one or the other of these opposing terms. There is no middle ground known in the Bible. No third party — neither friends nor enemies of God, neither holy nor unholy — have ever been recognized on the sacred page.

It is to the friends of God, then, doubtless, and not to alienated subjects, that he has committed the preservation and

propagation of his truth and worship; and credible evidence of holiness must doubtless be the condition of admission to visible membership. If there could be any doubt on the subject, the recorded history of this sacred institution would put an end to it. In the first age of the world, we find Cain and his offering rejected, and Abel offering to God *by faith* an acceptable sacrifice. We find the "sons of God," a name through the Scriptures appropriated to those who made a credible profession of religion, existing as a community distinct from the children of men, and forming, at length, criminal alliances of marriage with their daughters; by means of which the power of the church, as a religious community, was impaired, and the earth was filled with violence, which brought down the exterminating flood.

When the church, in prospect of this judgment, was to be preserved, borne on the bosom of that deep which swept away the ungodly, to whom was the work of preservation committed? It was committed to Noah, whom God had seen *righteous* before him, in that wicked generation. When the darkness of idolatry had again spread itself over the earth, and the foundations of a new dispensation were to be laid, to whom was that great work committed? To Abraham, who received circumcision as a seal of the *righteousness of the faith* which he had before he was circumcised; and of whom it was testified by the Searcher of hearts, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." To Isaac was committed the same charge, while Ishmael, who mocked, was cast out. To Jacob, in succession, it descended; while Esau, the profane, despising and alienating the patriarchal priesthood, was rejected.

When the patriarchal form of the church was succeeded

by the Jewish, the qualification of personal holiness was still *demanded*. The profession which the members of that church were required to make is a profession of true religion. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?" Can this be done without holiness?

The profession which the Jewish church actually *did make* is a profession of true religion. Moses is directed by the Most High to say unto the people: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people." And when Moses proposed the above terms of divine favor, all the people answered together, and said, "*All* that the Lord hath spoken we will do." In reference to a renewal of their covenant with God, Moses says to the Jewish church, "Thou hast avouched the Lord, this day, to be thy God; and the Lord hath avouched thee, this day, to be his peculiar people." If this is not a profession of true religion, language is inadequate to the making of such a profession. In the time of Asa, the church again covenanted to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul. "And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them."

Whenever, by their overt transgression, or neglect of duty, the credibility of their profession was destroyed, they were reproved and denounced as hypocrites. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth?" Their attendance upon the instituted worship of God is denounced,

also, as an abomination; while the immoralities of their conduct demonstrated the insincerity of their profession.

The continuance of formal worship without piety is threatened with the most terrible punishment. "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." If the Jews, as a community, were not required to profess, and in their covenant with God did not profess, true religion, how could drawing near with the mouth only be considered as a crime? When the members of this church are recalled from their backsliding by the prophets, they are directed to return in the exercise of holy affections. "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me: and thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it."

Whenever an individual, family, or tribe, demonstrated by obstinate disobedience their irreligion, they were to be excommunicated. On this ground, the generation that left Egypt were excluded from Canaan. "They could not enter in, because of unbelief." When the members of this same church had, by crucifying the Lord of glory, filled up the measure of their sin, they were broken off by unbelief; and those who succeeded them in the same church, both Jews and Gentiles, stood by faith. Hence, when John the Baptist, in anticipation of the excision of the great body of the Jews from visible

membership, came to prepare the way of the Lord before him, that preparation consisted in forming subjects for the continuance of the church, under her evangelical form. But what was the required preparation? It was repentance, and fruits meet for repentance. When our Saviour himself opened his ministry, he promulgated the same terms of discipleship. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The commission given by our Saviour to his apostles, at his ascension, directs them first to make disciples, and then to baptize them, inculcating universal obedience. The qualifications for discipleship Jesus had before disclosed. They were love to Christ, above father or mother; daily self-denial; real religion. The apostles, then, were to preach the Gospel, and, by the blessing of God, to make disciples, who, as such, were to become visible members of the church of Christ. In this manner the apostles understood their commission, and practised upon it. When, under their preaching, men were pricked in heart, and demanded, "What must we do to be saved?" the answer given was, "Repent and be baptized;" "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." All the instances of adult baptism, and of admission to the church, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, proceed upon the ground of a credible profession of religion. Accordingly, individual professors, and churches collectively, are denominated by a variety of epithets applicable only to persons of real piety; and applied to them with propriety only upon the supposition that they professed real religion. They are addressed as "beloved of God;" "saints, whose faith is spoken of throughout the whole world;" "full of goodness;" "the sanctified in Christ Jesus;" "children of the promise;" "those in whom God has begun a good work which he will carry on;" "faithful

brethren, who love all saints;" "whose hope is laid up in heaven;" "the elect of God;" "begotten with the word of truth;" "the sanctified of God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Whenever instances of immorality or apostasy occurred, by which the credibility of their profession was destroyed, they were dealt with, first, as fallen brethren; but, if incorrigible, they were excommunicated as deceivers or deceived.

The obligations of brotherly love originate in the supposed existence of the temper of Christ, in the hearts of his professed people. They are required to love one another as Christians, with a pure heart, fervently; for which love there could be no foundation, but upon the supposition of a credible profession of real religion.

The nature of the sacraments evinces also clearly the qualifications required of those who are to partake of them. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is not merely a memorial of an absent friend and benefactor; but the token of a covenant, in which we avouch the Lord Jehovah to be our God; and which is renewed and sealed as often as we sit down at his table. But who can with propriety seal a covenant which he has never made? and who, without holiness, can truly avouch the Lord Jehovah to be his God? It would be to swear falsely; it would be lying unto God, over the broken body and flowing blood of the Saviour.

The sacrament of baptism, as applied to infants, has the same reference to the perpetuity of the church, by securing fidelity in the religious education of children, that the Lord's supper has to the continuance and consummation of holiness in the hearts of believers. The parent, and the whole church, at the baptism of an infant, renew respectively their covenant with God, to be faithful in the work of religious education.

The parent devotes himself anew to God in this work, and dedicates his child to God: and the token of his covenant with God is applied to the child, as a memento to the parent that the child is depraved, and must be washed in the blood of Christ,—is devoted to God, and must be trained up in his nurture and admonition. It is successively applied to each child, because each is a sinner; because, as the charge increases, the duty of education becomes more important and difficult; and because parental worldliness and sloth demand reiterated admonition. By every baptism, also, all the families of the church who are engaged in the same work of religious education are admonished of their duty, and of the vows of God that are upon them; while to the church collectively, which is pledged to watch over the families of the faithful associated in her communion, it is an ordinance of frequent and perpetual recurrence, to keep awake the eye of inspection, and to fortify with ceaseless vigor the heart devoted to God in this great work: while, as an index, it points, with constant repetition, to the dear objects of her care. But how can those who give not *themselves* to God give up their *children?* or how can those who do not perform *themselves* the duties of religion engage to command their household, after them, to fear the Lord and keep his commandments?

Finally, the discriminations of the last day decide what are the qualifications for membership in the church of God. The family on earth and in heaven are one: and all in the church below who possess, in the sight of God, the qualifications which he has required, will be openly acknowledged and accepted in the day of judgment. But, in the day of judgment, the righteous only are accepted of God; and the wicked are turned into hell. Then will he root up in his field every plant which himself did not plant there. Then will he sepa-

rate the tares from the wheat. Then, with fan in his hand, will he thoroughly purge his floor. Then will he send forth his angels, and gather out of his kingdom whatsoever offends. Then will he say to them on his left hand, Depart, ye cursed; and they shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

The positions illustrated in this discourse justify, it is believed, the following inferences.

1. It is the policy and duty of civil governments to favor the exertions of churches for the support of religious institutions. It does not appertain to them to impose creeds, or to prescribe ceremonies of worship, or to inflict civil penalties for offences merely ecclesiastical. Nor is any injurious preference to be given to one denomination above another. To governments appertain, however, the selection and application of the most effectual means of public safety and prosperity. But it is by the moral influence of religious institutions only that civil laws can avail, to form the most perfect state of human society. Civil laws cannot reach the spring of action, and prevent social evils that annoy, or coerce social virtues that enrich society: and religion, by her moral influence alone, cannot arrest the arm of violence, or punish encroachments upon life and property. In free governments, also, where the people legislate and administer by delegated power, the laws cannot be executed beyond the sanction of public opinion, however corrupt that may be: while in despotic governments, the laws will often be made and executed with a severity which renders it difficult to decide which is most dreadful, the outrage of crime, or the terrific reäction of law. It is only by the influence from above, maintained by religious institutions, breathing their benign influence into systems of legislation, and extending their all-pervading efficacy through

every relation of social life, that men are qualified and inclined to enjoy the blessing of a free, mild, efficient government. Unless lawgivers, then, would hold their places as *sinecures*, and abandon the people to the evils which governments are instituted to prevent, they will be disposed, and, as men of principle, will feel bound, to promote the civil welfare of the community, by giving to religious institutions every practicable facility for exerting a vigorous moral influence upon the minds of men.

This was the policy of the fathers of New England; and explains the origin, nature, and design, of ecclesiastical *societies*. They were formed, not to *control* the churches, and not to *become* churches, and much less to *destroy* them; but to afford to the churches, with the advantage of system, and under the cognizance of law, an efficient coöperation.

This coöperation of ecclesiastical societies with the churches, in the support of religious institutions, always produced a benign effect. No such state of human societies, civil, moral, literary, and religious, has ever existed in our world to such an extent, and for so long a time, as has been formed, and continued, by these means, in New England: and whoever shakes the corner-stone of this system will bring to the dust the noblest edifice ever reared by divine and human coöperation, and will transmit to posterity evidence of preëminent folly, and ceaseless occasion of execration and regret.

2. Every person believing himself to be the subject of true religion, and able to afford to others credible evidence of the fact, is bound to confess Christ before men, and to enrol himself as a member of some visible church.

It is the revealed will of God, that his people should exist in a visible organized form, both for the more advantageous enjoyment of personal privileges, and for their more efficient

coöperation in the preservation and extension of the religion of the Gospel. Every believer needs the aid of ordinances peculiar to the church; nor is he at liberty to neglect the means of his own edification. He owes to his Saviour the influence of his example, and has no right to put his light under a bushel. He needs the confidence for action which a profession of religion only can inspire, and the facilities and excitements to action which social enterprise alone can afford. The friends of their country, when she is invaded, may as well refuse to enrol themselves in an army, and trust to individual effort, as the friends of Christ may stand alone in their conflict with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. The Captain of our salvation has commanded his friends to associate, and act together as the Lord's host. He allows of no exception to this general order. He required an open profession of religion when the loss of property and reputation were the certain consequences, and death itself stared every man in the face who should confess him before men.

Prevailing doubts, concerning the reality of personal religion, may occasion the delay of a public profession for a time; but he who *believes* himself to be a Christian, and will not assume the responsibilities and perform the duties connected with a public profession, affords fearful evidence that he is ashamed of Christ, and that Christ in the day of judgment will be ashamed of him.

3. A church of Christ cannot be constituted or continued without personal holiness in the members.

We do not say that every member must be holy; but, if none are pious, it cannot be a church of Christ. If a small number only are pious, in alliance with an overwhelming majority by whom their designs are overruled, and the end

of a visible church defeated, they do not so sanctify the visible community as to constitute it a church of Christ. In such alliance, the pious, instead of acting as pioneers of the cross, will be led as captives in chains, to grace the triumphs of error,—will serve as a decoy of others to the unhallowed community, and as a quietus to the consciences of worldly men, who will feel safe, as long as pious people dare to continue and act with them. The command of Christ to individuals in such circumstances is, "Come out from among them, ye my people."

Baptism in infancy does not constitute adult membership in the visible church.

It neither secures nor proves the existence of personal holiness in those who are baptized, when they come to years of understanding. And we are not at liberty to suppose that God has required personal holiness as a qualification for membership in his church, and for purposes essential to its existence, and which unholy men never did and never will accomplish; and then, that he has contravened his own appointment, and insured the defeat of his own designs, by admitting the unholy to membership, in virtue of a rite administered in infancy. The children of the church, baptized in infancy, are the objects of her peculiar care; and if in any sense church-members, they are not in any *such* sense as supersedes the necessity of a credible profession of religion, when they come to years of understanding. If they are members of the church at all, it must be on the ground of membership in the family of the faithful; so that, when family membership ceases, their connection with the church must cease, of course. I cannot but believe, however, that language more accurate, and less liable to produce mistake and controversy, may be employed, than that which denominates

baptized children church-members, without intending, in reality, what is included in the term as applied to adult membership.

A regularly ordained ministry, an orthodox creed, and devout forms of worship, cannot constitute a church of Christ, without personal holiness in the members. Much less can civil associations of men, though formed for religious purposes.

The attempt which is making to confound the scriptural distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate blots out practically, as has long been done in theory, the doctrine of regeneration by the special influence of the Holy Ghost. To abolish the revealed terms of membership in the church of God, and to form churches without reference to doctrinal opinion, or experimental religion, and only by location within parish limits, and by certain civil qualifications, is the most pernicious infidelity that was ever broached. *It breaks the spring of motion in the centre of God's system of good will to men, and stops the work of salvation.*

The church, as a collective body, is the organ of God's moral administration,—a chartered community, formed for the special purpose of giving efficacy and perpetuity to the revealed laws of the divine government. The Bible, without churches to give efficacy to its precepts and institutions, will no more accomplish the gracious purposes of Heaven, than law-books will accomplish the ends of civil government, without an organized administration. The concerns of agriculture, and commerce, and science, and the arts, may be left to the spontaneous impulse of ambition, interest, and necessity. But not so the concerns of religion. In a world of revolt and alienation from God, no spontaneous care of his cause is to be anticipated; but, rather, a common, extended, powerful,

habitual opposition. To propel such a cause, from the beginning to the end of time, with all its attendant self-denials, toils, expenses, and sufferings, against the buffetings of such a stream, requires the steady, vigorous action of a constantly organized body, animated by a love stronger than death, and which many waters cannot quench. For this purpose, the church, composed exclusively, as far as man can judge, of the sanctified in Christ Jesus, is organized. But this *specific character* of her members is as indispensable to her chartered efficacy as her organized existence itself. The administration of civil government may as well be committed to the known enemies of a nation, or the command of her armies to officers in opposing hostile ranks, as to commit to the hands of unholy men the great work for which the church of God is instituted. To men, withheld from the appropriate duties of their station by aversion, sloth, business, or pleasure, is committed the administration of the divine practical system for accomplishing the salvation of the world. In such hands the work will stop. The constant energy of love in the heart, quickened daily by new supplies of grace, is scarcely adequate to the impulse required. In the hands, then, of the unholy, the work will not be done; it will be opposed. The faith delivered to the saints will be contended against. The Sabbath will be encroached upon by its unhallowed defenders. The work of rearing *pious* youth for the sanctuary will cease; and *talents*, and *science*, and *taste*, will constitute the primary accomplishments of the ministers of Christ. The religious education of children will be neglected; and as to the heathen, the *virtuous heathen*, as they are called, will be left to their almost equal privileges with Christians, to find their way to heaven without the Gospel.

That system of aggression which would break down the

sacred enclosures about the church, and throw the church and the world together into one common field; and which, to accomplish its purpose, would bring into competition the rights of churches and of congregations; and, by designed invidious excitement, arouse and direct the stream of popular indignation against the church,—is a system of practical infidelity, armed with the principles of a most efficient persecution. It is not only robbing the church of her chartered rights, but it is making their existence and exercise a crime. It is rendering that piety, bestowed upon her for the salvation of others as well as for her own, an occasion of contumely. It is defrauding her of the confidence and affection of the surrounding community, in which her light has shined with benign influence, and in which, without this designed excitement of invidious feeling, she might expect to reap in due time the fruit of her labor.

All the churches of our Lord, and all ecclesiastical societies, and all men who wish well to the civil as promoted by the religious order of our fathers, have more cause to fear and to execrate such a system of aggression, than all the infidel books that were ever printed. And though accomplished by giving to ecclesiastical societies the spoils of the church, it is done at the peril of the existence of these civil associations themselves. Ecclesiastical societies are the offspring, though not the members, of the church. Where churches exist, and are faithful, a moral influence is exerted on the community, which produces a voluntary coöperation on the part of those who are not pious, for the support of divine institutions,—resulting in what is termed the congregation. But, let the church be overwhelmed and amalgamated with the world,—or, rather, let the world itself, without religion, become the church,—and, speedily, there

will be neither church nor congregation. The main-spring being broken, the system will run down. While the impulse of past religious enterprise continues, and fashion, continued by the existence of real churches, operates, and opposition to truth produces energy, the splendid forms of religion may remain; but let the power of religious impulse be spent, and the system of demolition be carried through, and the form itself of the church would cease, the Sabbath would be blotted out, and infidelity and profligacy would fill the land.

The ordination of pastors, and organization of churches, without reference to doctrinal belief or experimental religion, is also a complete annihilation of the church,— as really a blotting out of God's revealed practical system of saving men, as that revision of the Bible which draws the obliterating pen across the doctrinal contents of the whole. The one is the destruction of the book of laws; the other, of the organized system of administration for giving them efficacy; and both together constitute the most efficient system of infidelity with which the church of God was ever assailed. Every church whose rights are thus invaded, while struggling for existence among the waves, has a claim upon the sympathies, the prayers, and, if needed, the charities, of every other church in the land. The stream which beats upon her is one whose power may be directed to any point in our country; and which, with relentless impartiality, will overwhelm any church, of any name, disposed to maintain the doctrines of the Bible. *All the churches of our land have cause to feel the assault which is made upon their Christian liberty*, and to stand together upon the defensive, in order to resist aggression, and guarantee to each other an inviolable integrity. If any church, through fear, shall be disposed to temporize, she may obtain the enviable privilege of being last destroyed;

but, more probably, will be among the first to fall, as timidity and indecision seldom fail to tempt aggression, and to render resistance unavailing.

4. Local churches have a right to require a confession of faith, and a satisfactory account of Christian experience, as the condition of membership in their communion. A belief of the truth, attended by corresponding affections of heart, is a part of the evidence which is indispensable to constitute a profession of religion credible. If, then, churches have no right to interrogate a candidate for admission concerning the articles of his belief and the exercises of his heart, they are deprived of the only means of preserving the church as a society of faithful men; for, external actions, without any reference to belief or experience, do not furnish credible evidence of piety. Besides, the object of association, in all cases, is the increase of *strength* for some given purpose: and substantial agreement in the main design is, in the nature of things, indispensable to the attainment of any end whatever, by means of association. The builders of Babel were obliged to desist, for the want of a common medium of ideas, as the means of concert in action. But how much more had their confusion been confounded, had they, though possessing a common language, differed as to the position, form, and materials, of their building. Association, in this case, would have been accumulated weakness, instead of strength; each arresting the other's hand, and pulling down what the other had built. The same is true, and more eminently true, of divided counsels in associations for moral and religious purposes. "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" is a question which carries its answer upon the face of it. And that every family, or city, or kingdom, divided against itself, is brought to desolation, is an inspired declaration, the

truth of which has been confirmed by immemorial experience. A method more infallible to defeat all efficient action in behalf of religion in *any* form could not be contrived, than indiscriminately to constitute churches of heterogeneous and warring materials. Every church would be, in this case, another Babel. No building of any form or size could go up; the association would answer no purpose, but that of causing its members to do nothing.* As long as Christians differ in their views of doctrine, and discipline, and experimental religion, too widely to admit of minding the same things practically, they ought to associate in churches by themselves; that those who agree may, by harmonious action, promote that good which a more comprehensive organization would most assuredly prevent. But it has been said that God has made it the duty of men to commemorate the death of Christ; therefore, a church can have no right to prescribe terms of communion that would exclude many well-meaning moral men. The church does not prescribe the terms of communion. It is God who has prescribed them, and given to the church the charge of perpetuating her existence, and accomplishing the end of it, by a succession of qualified members. And though it be the duty of *all men* to be qualified to join the church, it is the duty of *none* to join it till they *are qualified*, by becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus; nor is it the duty of any church to receive them, till they afford credible evidence of the change. But of the credibility of this profession, the *church*, and not the applicant, is the constituted judge. If she errs in her judgment of evidence, and excludes the qualified, she must answer it to God. But the abuse of a right is no evidence of its non-

* But this, to many, seems to be the *ultimatum* of utility, — the only object of ministerial effort and church fellowship being peace, peace.

existence. No corporation could preserve itself, and its interests, upon the principle that the applicant, and not the chartered body, is to judge of the qualifications for membership. Would monied men invest their capital in chartered communities in which the borrowers, at their own discretion, may become a majority of the board, and control, at pleasure, the whole concern? And has God committed the care of the true riches to associations of pious men; and then given to the men of the world the right of membership at their own discretion, and thus of changing the character and defeating the end of the institution?

5. Local churches, with their pastors, agreed in their views of doctrine and Christian experience, have a right to associate, for mutual defence and increased efficiency in the propagation of religion; and to agree upon standards of doctrine, and modes of discipline, in accordance with their understanding of the Bible.

No local church can be compelled by other churches to associate. Each in herself is independent of any jurisdiction from without, exercised against her consent. Still, it is a duty which every church owes to herself, to other churches, and to God, to associate for purposes of increased safety and efficiency, in answering the various designs of her organization. All the reasons which dictate the association of individuals of a given district in local churches, for local purposes, dictate with equal clearness the expediency of the association of churches of a more extended district, for more extended general purposes. The elementary companies which constitute an army may as wisely claim independence, and refuse to act in any but occasional concert, mutually solicited as the exigencies of war may demand, as for local churches, in the vicissitudes of their warfare, to depend entirely upon the tem-

porary interpositions of churches unallied, but for momentary purposes. If the conduct of a local church affected none but herself, she might with less responsibility stand alone. But her conduct exerts, in many respects, a powerful influence, good or bad, upon sister churches: and though she cannot be compelled to do it, she is still bound in equity to consult them with regard to such parts of her administration as involve their interest as well as her own.

If any churches are persuaded that the mode of organization for mutual aid and enterprise is revealed, let them obey the dictates of conscience; and if others suppose that no form of alliance is prescribed, let them obey the dictates of an enlightened discretion. Only let the end of association and concentrated action be obtained, and it is enough.

That local churches have a right to submit their difficulties to councils of sister churches for advice and decision, is certain from primitive example. The right, also, to agree beforehand upon the churches and pastors to whom the reference of difficulties shall in all cases be made, and to bind themselves in mutual covenant, that the decision of such standing councils shall be final, is an essential attribute of Christian liberty; and every analogy of the human character dictates the superior efficacy of known stated tribunals, for the adjustment of ecclesiastical as well as for the adjustment of civil causes. The principles of evidence in both cases are the same. The effect of harmonious, or of continually conflicting decisions, would in both cases be the same. The consequences of passion and prejudice, transfused into a council, or civil court, would be the same; and the consequences of having civil or ecclesiastical officers responsible for their conduct only to a popular board, usually under their entire control, would, in both cases, secure impunity in transgression.

The constitution of a stated council, voluntarily adopted, is no more a giving up of religious liberty, than the reference by law of secular disputes to a stated civil court, instead of a mutual arbitration, is a giving up of civil rights: and it no more constitutes an ecclesiastical despotism, lording it over God's heritage, than civil courts constitute a civil despotism, lording it over states and nations. The cry of popery, against stated ecclesiastical councils, is just as senseless as the cry of despotism would be against the constitution of the United States. The one is a voluntary civil compact, for general purposes, that independent states could not achieve but by union: and the other is a voluntary compact, for religious purposes, that independent churches cannot achieve but by union.

The independence of the New England churches, as asserted by our fathers, did not, as might easily be shown, preclude the existence of a voluntary alliance of churches for ecclesiastical purposes. It consisted in the perfect independence of every church as to her articles of faith, or forms of worship; and gives no license to other churches to thrust themselves in as rulers and judges, in her cases of discipline, without her consent. But it did not preclude the right of churches to avail themselves of each other's aid, by any form of association which they might deem either scriptural or expedient.

Notwithstanding the torrent of invective poured out against *creeds*, after the most deliberate attention to the subject, I have not been able to perceive any rational ground of objection against them. There are in every science elementary principles, without the knowledge of which it can never be understood. The same is true in theology; for the God who governs the natural world according to stated laws, administers the concerns of his moral government by the operation

of general principles. It is fashionable, I am aware, to decry system in theology; but why the Most High should be supposed to observe *order* in the government of the *natural world*, so as to lay the foundation for demonstration and system in philosophy, and, at the same time, be supposed to govern his moral kingdom by laws obscurely revealed, including no general principles, connected by no dependencies, and excluding the possibility of system in theology, is an enigma for those to explain who choose to decry creeds, and to speak contemptuously of system in theology.

What is the precise ground of objection to creeds? Does the Bible contain no important elementary principles? Are these incapable of being understood? Can they by no means be exhibited in a brief, connected form? or can their meaning be correctly expressed in no other language than the precise terms in which they are revealed? or do the Scriptures prohibit a concise exhibition of revealed truth? How, then, can the Scriptures be translated, or what right have we to preach the Gospel, or to publish sermons, or commentaries? — Or how can Christians communicate to each other verbally their various opinions concerning the meaning of revelation? It is not the object of creeds to supplant the Bible, but to ascertain, for purposes of concentrated effort in the propagation of truth, how pastors and churches understand the Bible. If churches were formed only to worship an unknown God, or to blow the trumpet of an uncertain sound, they would need no confessions of faith, however they might be pleased to adopt, and feel themselves bound in conscience to propagate, their articles of unbelief. If churches had nothing to do but to print and distribute the received version of the Bible, without note or comment, they might dispense with standards of doctrine: or, if men attached

invariably the same ideas to the language of the Bible, creeds would be superfluous, and the profession of a *general belief in the Bible* would suffice. But, as men differ indefinitely as to the import of Scripture language, a profession of a belief in the Bible, as the means of informing those who have a right to know in what *particular* sense the Bible is understood, has now become an intelligible profession of no one truth which it contains. And to profess that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*,— a phrase which, in the apostolic age, had a known and definite meaning,—does not now, when different circumstances exist, and opposite meanings are attached to it, communicate any intelligible profession of our belief on that point: and all pretension of giving an account of our faith, in that manner, is an artifice for concealment unworthy of honest men, and an indignity offered to the understandings of those who desire to know in what particular manner we understand the doctrines of the Bible. If men believe nothing, let them profess nothing; and if they intend to do nothing to defend and propagate the truth, in any form, let them not become members of the church of Christ. But if they have adopted opinions which they believe to be true, and which they feel constrained to propagate, why should they not frame intelligible symbols of their faith, as the means of securing harmonious and efficient action?

In the nature of the case, I have been able to perceive no adequate cause for the virulent invective employed against creeds; but when I have compared the creeds of the Reformation with the Bible, and have perceived their general coincidence with the unperverted dictates of revelation, and their efficacy in uniting the churches and preserving the truth, I have not been surprised at the torrent of declamation which has been poured forth against them; though I have not

ceased to feel astonishment at the misrepresentations of them which men, of veracity in other respects, have felt themselves at liberty to make. An invading enemy is always prejudiced against fortified positions, and standing armies; and would much prefer an open country, and an undisciplined militia. And if the good-natured people invaded would consent to adopt the same prejudices, and to act upon the defensive, without concert or fortifications, they would much oblige the enemy; who, both before and after their subjugation, would doubtless eulogize them as preëminent in liberality and the social virtues.

Creeds and associated churches create a rugged warfare to the innovator, and reward him with slow gains, and stinted victories of doubtful continuance. Who ever knew a professor of religion of lax morals, who was not opposed to evangelical discipline; or one buffeted for his faults, without reformation, who did not cry persecution; or an attempt made to unite churches, for the defence of the Gospel, which did not arouse the energies, and call forth the declamation, of those who avow their opposition to the doctrines of the Reformation? Not a movement can be made on this subject, but, instantly, the Pope is at the door; the dungeons of the inquisition are under our feet, and the chains, the rack, and the stake, and the fire, are prepared. It is strange, indeed, that the friends of truth should fear those associations of churches, which the enemies of truth regard, above all things, with aversion and dread. Strange that the prevalence of the same creed, and the same principles of association, by means of which the power of the Pope was broken, and half his dominions wrested from him, should be regarded with terror, as the sure means of establishing in this land his iron-hearted despotism. I cannot read such declamation, without deep and continual

sorrow of heart, that the friends of truth should be deceived and alarmed by it; while the enemy, laughing at our credulity, moves on in firm phalanx, to divide and conquer. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

6. Churches of different denominations, who regard each other as composed generally of members giving evidence of personal holiness, though differing in their forms of worship and modes of administration, and, *to some extent, in their views of doctrine*, are bound to regard each other with Christian affection; to abstain from all acts of mutual aggression; and, as early and as far as may be, to mature a system of efficient coöperation, for promoting those interests of the Redeemer's kingdom which are common to them all.

The spirit of proselytism which regards exclusively the interests of one denomination, and is concerned in bringing to heaven men in one way or not at all, and which disregards the feelings and interests of other churches, is a principle of war. As human nature is constituted, there can be no peace among the churches of our Lord of different names, until this spirit is frowned into non-existence. *Mutual safety is indispensable to peace and harmonious action, among churches of different denominations.* And with trumpet-tongue the providence of God is calling upon Christians of every denomination to cease from their limited views and selfish ends, and to unite in the conflict which is to achieve the subjugation of the world to Christ. The mischiefs of this spirit have been great, and have been endured long enough to afford experimental evidence of its wickedness and folly. From the time the reformed churches commenced the sacramental controversy, the reformation received a check; and, to this moment,

the lines in nations, cities, towns and villages, are drawn in many instances between Papist and Protestant, as they were drawn at the Reformation. And now, for centuries, the resources of Protestant churches have been exhausted in standing still, from the balance of each other's action and reäction. While the world have been perishing around them, they have been contending whether a small remnant of men should go to heaven precisely in this or some other way. It is time to cease from this limited enterprise. Jesus Christ has need of our harmonious exertion, and the world has need of it. Never can the world be emancipated, till those who love our Lord and the souls of men are released by voluntary suffrage from the diversions, toils, and irritations, of a war establishment. All the men on our various posts of observation, and all the soldiers in our armies of reserve, must be poured upon the territories of the enemy, while we, without fear, and undefended, dwell safely side by side. Too long have our alienations been the scoff of infidels, and made us the tools of designing and ambitious men; and withdrawn from the cause of Christ that influence upon society which it belongs to his religion to exert, and which kind feelings and harmonious action would not fail to produce. And may God grant that this generation pass not away, before a delegation from all *Christian denominations* shall assemble, to attend the funeral of bigotry and heresy; and to lay them so deep in the same grave, that they shall not rise till the trumpet of the archangel shall call them to judgment, to answer for their crimes, and to receive the punishment of their deeds!

7. Local churches are liable to inadequate views of the design and duties of their organization. If the views contained in this discourse are correct, more time should be devoted by the members of local churches to consultation and

social prayer. No secular interest so diversified, extended, important, and difficult, depending on the resources and steady coöperation of so many individuals of different age and capacity, could be successfully protected and extended, without reiterated consultation. And yet how difficult, how almost impossible it is, to convene punctually the members of almost any church, to attend to the public concerns of Christ's kingdom, and to implore the blessing of God upon their labors! Could a few hours on each day of the monthly concert be employed better than in deliberation and prayer? Are thirty-six hours in a year too much time to be devoted by every church to the great work of saving men, for the promotion of which churches were organized, and are still preserved?

It is equally manifest, that, in conducting the enterprise of evangelizing the world, the churches of our Lord must revert, in some degree, to primitive usage, which committed to stated pastors the concerns of local churches, and to evangelists the work of propagating the Gospel. We are not to expect the gift of inspiration; but neither are we to expect that a work greater than that which the primitive church conducted will move on to its consummation without the agency of an order of men, wise and pious, exempt from pastoral cares, and devoted exclusively to the work. The resources required to evangelize the world within the period assigned for that event by revelation cannot be committed to incidental management. The number of missionaries to be raised up and supported, the stations to be selected, the fostering care demanded to rear and perpetuate missionary establishments, require imperiously that the churches put in requisition the time and talents of some of their ablest men. Stated pastors cannot do the work. Associations of ministers incidentally convened cannot bring to it that maturity of thought, comprehension of plan, unity

of design, adaptation of means, and constancy of application, which are indispensable. And were it not that the exigency itself will produce the remedy, the extended system of missions would be crushed beneath its own weight, and fall into irretrievable confusion and disgrace.* Local churches, with their pastors, are the primary springs of that river which is to flow from the sanctuary, deeper and broader, till it becomes impassable. But another order of men, devoted to the work, are to search out the barren places, and to conduct and distribute the fertilizing waters of this mighty river, until the whole earth shall become as the garden of God.

8. Local churches may perceive, in this discourse, the infallible means of their own preservation and prosperity.

It is too often said that the church universal will live, but that there is no security that a particular church will live. But local churches, too, may be perpetual. It is only for a church to answer the end of her organization, in the preservation of the truth, in the maintenance of God's worship, in the religious education of children, in the rearing up of pastors and missionaries, and to lend a ready coöperation of charity and prayer for the evangelizing of the world, and all the promises of the covenant of grace secure her continuance. The design of God in her formation, as long as that design is accomplished, the ample means provided with reference to her preservation, the expressions of divine love and paternal care, the promises made to the prayer of faith, to the maintenance of sound doctrine, to the faithful education of children, to the

* The endowment of professorships in a literary institution, for purposes of science or religion, is not more demanded, than similar endowments for purposes of practical benevolence in conducting the work of missions ; and whoever shall find it in his heart to set an example of such munificence will establish a claim upon the gratitude of the present and future generations not surpassed by any.

administration of Gospel discipline, and to charitable exertions for the salvation of men, all guarantee, through successive ages, the existence of the church that so walks in his statutes as to answer in any good degree the design of her organization. *Practical fidelity is the condition of perpetuity;* and though no promise guarantees absolutely that the condition shall be fulfilled, as absolute promises secure the obedience and perseverance of individual believers, and the continuance on earth of a visible church, still the condition is a practicable one, and one which has been fulfilled for ages by local churches, and may be fulfilled forever. Such, indeed, is the love and patience of God towards his people, that instead of its being an impossible thing to secure the continuance of a local church, it is, usually, only the neglect of duty and contempt of admonition for a long time that prevails on the Almighty to give her up.

This view of the subject is calculated to cheer the hearts of feeble churches struggling with adversity, and to lift up their hands in the work of the Lord. They possess a charter more valuable than worlds, and are under no necessity of giving it up. The powers of darkness, enraged by their light, stand around the sacred territory with malignant impatience, waiting to reöccupy their possession, and spread over it the darkness of death. But let feeble churches, instead of doing nothing because they cannot do everything, do what they can; and the voice of Heaven to them is, "O thou afflicted, tossed with the tempest, and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires,—and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children; and whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake."

The same view of the subject may animate the churches that are strong, to continue and augment the resources consecrated to the work of domestic missions. Such labors of love are not an experiment of doubtful issue, and no work of supererogation; but the fulfilment of a relative duty, upon which God has always smiled, and always will smile. Let every church, that would perpetuate her own existence, and secure the return into her own bosom of the munificence of Heaven, put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies towards feeble churches, and open wide her helping hand. The considerations which should unite the churches of New England in these efforts of mutual preservation are most powerful. They are united by a common origin, a common faith, worship, and discipline; and by the endearing recollection of common toils and dangers. They have wept, and fasted, and prayed together, through scenes of Indian warfare, and European aggression; and have rejoiced together in temporal deliverances, and in the greater joy of spiritual harvests; and now they are called to the enterprise of sowing and reaping together the harvest of the world. Shall one of these hallowed communities, then, waxing poor, be suffered to expire? Shall one of them, an object of lawless aggression, be permitted to fall?

MY DEAR BROTHER:

I rejoice in your establishment as a pastor of this respectable church, in alliance with our beloved brother,* called to devote himself to the more extended concerns of the Redeemer's kingdom. I rejoice in the prospect of usefulness laid open before you, and in the dawning light of that bright day

* Rev. Samuel Worcester, D. D., Corresponding Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

which is destined soon to break upon the world. If any considerations could tempt me to regret the lapse of years, and to wish to tread again with joyful foot the threshold of the sanctuary, it would be to share with you, and those of your age, in the delightful enterprise of propagating the Gospel; to rejoice with you in the glorious victories of the church, in which you will probably be a partaker, after many of us who introduce you to this holy warfare are laid in the grave. The advice which I have to give you on this occasion will not be miscellaneous, but will be confined to a single point. As your time is to be devoted chiefly to the duties of the pastoral relation, devote yourself primarily to the vital interests of your own and other churches; and especially to the work of promoting revivals of religion. Let the scorner delight in his scorning; but remember, thou man of God, that churches without vital religion are but the splendid sepulchre of souls, and the gateway to hell. The existence, and vigor, and extension of the cause of Christ, depend upon the outpouring of the Spirit from on high. Revivals of religion are indispensable to guard the churches against that voluptuousness which is the consequence of national prosperity; and to prevent the idolatry of talent, and the fascinations of science; to maintain that sound doctrine which the unholy will not bear; to maintain the power of godliness, where the standards of doctrine are correct; to maintain an efficient discipline; to give efficacy to the system of religious education; to provide pious and able pastors and missionaries; to augment the number of believers in the churches; to give to religion its proper influence upon human society; and to constitute one vigorous heart and soul, by which the life-blood shall be propelled to the extremities of the earth. They are also indispensable to meet the reäction of that

instinctive alliance of worldly policy and hatred of the truth, which increasing discrimination in doctrine, and strictness of practice, and ardor of Christian enterprise, will not fail to array against the cause of Christ. There is a point of success, in the progress of the church to inherit the earth, at which a conflict must be sustained to determine whether she shall advance in firm phalanx around the banner of her Captain, or turn her back in a shameful discomfiture, which centuries would not be able to retrieve.

Brother, despise not this formidable opposition, and sleep not on your post. Be prepared for argument or for action, as the exigencies of the day may demand. But remember, that no adequate security for the churches can be found, but in a revival of vital godliness. Preaching and writing books on the side of error are comparatively nothing, for truth has always laughed at the shaking of such a spear. But a system of deliberate action, emancipated from the restraints of conscience, and moving onward by the impulse of passion to accomplish the destruction of evangelical churches, merely because it can, is not to be stopped in its course by argument. Talents are not to be despised, or literary acquisitions to be neglected; but Leviathan will not be penetrated by such missiles, and the darkness of his deep will not be illuminated by such light. One powerful revival of religion in a great city will accomplish the overthrow of more error, and the propagation of more truth, in one month, than ages devoted to literary acquisition or logical discussion.

These means are not to be neglected. But the champions of the cross must write upon their knees, one hand wielding the pen, and the other lifted up in prayer; and while they write, the churches must pour out before God their fervent and effectual supplications. Sermons must be written and

preached in demonstration of the Spirit; and the argument of their controversy must be set on fire from heaven, before it will enlighten the dark heart, or melt the heart of stone.

Brother, be mighty in prayer,— be mighty in the Scriptures; and, though weak in yourself, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might to revive in the churches of Christ that spirit of vital godliness which will raise them from the dust, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Thus, diligent in business, and fervent in spirit, consecrate your days; and you will contribute, in a most effectual manner, to fulfil the promise which gives to the Son of God the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

SERMON VII.

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." JUDE 3.

By the faith once delivered to the saints, is to be understood the doctrines of the Gospel. These were delivered to the saints by holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The saints to whom they were delivered were those who constituted the church under the old dispensation, and the new. The exhortation to contend for them earnestly supposes that they would be powerfully assailed; and yet, that they might be known and defended.

It is proposed, in this discourse,

TO GIVE AN EPITOME OF WHAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE FAITH DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS; — TO STATE THE REASONS FOR BELIEVING IT SUCH; — AND TO POINT OUT THE MANNER IN WHICH IT BECOMES THE CHURCHES OF OUR LORD TO CONTEND FOR IT.

The faith once delivered to the saints includes, it is believed, among other doctrines, the following:

That men are free agents, in the possession of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires, reasonable that he should

require it, and fit that he should inflict literally the entire penalty of disobedience. Such ability is here intended as lays a perfect foundation for government by law, and for rewards and punishments according to deeds.

That the divine law requires love to God with all the heart, and impartial love for men, together with certain overt duties to God and men by which this love is to be expressed; and that this law is supported by the sanctions of eternal life and eternal death.

That the ancestors of our race violated this law; that, in some way, as a consequence of their apostasy, all men, as soon as they become capable of accountable action, do, *of their own accord*, *most freely* and *most wickedly* withhold from God the *supreme love*, and from man the *impartial love*, which the law requires, besides violating many of its practical precepts; and that the obedience of the heart, which the law requires, has ceased entirely from the whole race of man.

That, according to the principles of moral government, obedience, either antecedent or subsequent to transgression, cannot avert the penalty of law; and that pardon, upon condition of repentance merely, would destroy the efficacy of moral government.

That an atonement has been made for sin by Jesus Christ, with reference to which God can maintain the influence of his law and forgive sin, upon condition of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: that all men are invited sincerely, in this way, to return to God, with an assurance of pardon and eternal life if they comply.

That a compliance with these conditions is practicable, in the regular exercise of the powers and faculties given to man as an accountable creature; and is prevented only by the

exercise of a voluntary criminal aversion to God, so inflexibly obstinate, that, by motives merely, men are never persuaded to repent and believe.

That God is able, by his Spirit, to make to the mind of man such an application of the truth as shall unfailingly convince him of sin, render him willing to obey the Gospel, and actually and joyfully obedient.

That this special influence of the Holy Spirit is given according to the supreme discretion or good pleasure of God; and yet, ordinarily, is so inseparably associated with the use of means by the sinner, as to create ample encouragement to attend upon them, and to render all hopes of conversion while neglecting or rejecting the truth, or while living in open sin, eminently presumptuous.

That believers are justified by the merits of Christ through faith, and are received into a covenant with God which secures their continuance in holiness forever; while those who die in their sins will continue to sin wilfully, and to be punished justly, forever.

That God exercises a providential government, which extends to all events in such a manner as to lay a just foundation for resignation to his will in afflictions brought upon us by the wickedness of men, and for gratitude in the reception of good in all the various modes of human instrumentality; that all events shall illustrate his glory, and be made subservient to the good of his kingdom; and that this government is administered in accordance with a purpose or plan known and approved of by him from the beginning.

Finally, that the God of the universe has revealed himself to us as existing in three persons,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—possessing distinct and equal attributes, and

in some unrevealed manner, so united, as to constitute *one God.*

These are the doctrines which, it is believed, were delivered to the saints, and which have been held, substantially, though with some variety of modification, by the true church of God, in all ages. To prevent circumlocution, I shall, in this discourse, call them *the Evangelical System;* and, for the same reason, I shall call the opposite doctrines *the Liberal System.**

It has been common to support these doctrines by the quotation of proof-texts. But to these a different exposition is given, more reasonable, it is said, and carrying with it a higher probability of truth; which leads to critical exposition, opens a wide field for evasion, and creates perplexity and indecision. My design, at present, is to avail myself of collateral evidence only, with the view of attempting to decide, in this way, which is the correct exposition of the proof-texts, the evangelical or the liberal exposition.

For the sake of argument, I shall suppose the evidence from exposition to be, on each side, exactly balanced; and proceed to lay into the scale of evangelical exposition those arguments

*I choose to call these doctrines the evangelical system, not only because I believe them to be the Gospel, but because no man or denomination has held them so exclusively as to render it proper to designate them by the name of an individual or a sect. It is a select system, which some of almost every denomination hold, and some reject; and which ought to be characterized by some general term indicative of the system as held in all ages, and among all denominations of Christians. I call the opposite doctrines the liberal system, not as admitting that these doctrines or their advocates possess any peculiar claims to liberality, in any just acceptation of the term; but simply because it is the epithet by which its friends have chosen to distinguish their religious opinions.

which seem to furnish evidence of its correctness. I observe, then,

1. That the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the most direct and obvious meaning of the sacred text. By *obvious meaning*, I intend that which is actually suggested, without note or comment, to the minds of honest and unlettered men. That the proof-texts teach the doctrines of the evangelical system in this manner is alleged by learned infidels as a reason for rejecting the inspiration of the Bible; by Unitarian commentators and writers, as a reason for restraining, modifying and turning aside, the text; and by critics who translate or expound without reference to theological opinions; and by the better part of the Unitarian German critics, after having denied the inspiration of the Bible.* No translators have been able to maintain a reputation for classical literature, and to sink, in a translation, the obvious meaning below, and bring up the philosophical meaning upon the surface.† The editors of the "Improved Version" have manifested as much good will, with as little conscience, in the attempt, as has ever appeared; and yet have been compelled to allow the proof-texts, in most instances, to speak the offensive doctrines, and to content themselves with a simple contradiction of them in notes and comments. Interpretation according to the obvious import has always resulted in the evangelical system; while expositors according to the supposed rational and philosophical mode of exposition have differed indefinitely. It is not the evangelical, but the liberal rule of

* See Stuart's Letters, p. 155.

† This fact shows that these remarks are as applicable to the original text as to the translation; for surely, if the evangelical were not the obvious import in the original, nothing would be easier than to give a literal translation which should leave them out of sight entirely.

interpretation, which has filled the world with divers doctrines, perplexity, and doubt. All versions, and all expositions, according to the obvious meaning, of whatever country or age, do substantially agree in the evangelical system; and agree with the understanding of mankind at large who read the Bible. The Bible, also, for the most part, was written by men who understood language only according to its obvious import; and for the use of men to whom it must have been a sealed book upon any other principle of interpretation. Add to this the testimony of the Bible to its own plainness: that it can be read by him that runs, and understood by the wayfaring man though a fool; that it is a lamp to the path; that it furnishes the man of God thoroughly; that it is profitable for doctrine; that it is able to make wise to salvation; that it creates obligation to know the truth, and renders error inexcusable. Now, if the obvious meaning of the proof-texts be not the true one, and if the true meaning be one which can be seen only by men of classical and philosophical vision, then the common people have *no Bible*. For the book itself teaches *them* nothing; and the critical expositions of uninspired men are not a revelation. The character of God is also implicated, as having practised on his subjects a most deplorable deception; as having taught them falsehood in their own tongue, and the truth in an unknown tongue; for, to the common people, the obvious is the only meaning of terms. If, therefore, the truth is not contained in the obvious meaning, it is not revealed to them in any form. Indeed, if the obvious be not the true import, the Bible teaches them falsehood. And yet, with a book whose only intelligible meaning on the subject of doctrines is false, and whose real import is necessarily unknown, the common people are required, upon pain of his eternal displeasure, to abhor error, and to love and

obey the truth! Was the glorious God ever more scandalized than by such an imputation? We have heard of his having made a great part of mankind on purpose to damn them, and of his sending to hell infants and helpless victims for the non-performance of impossibilities: and, if such were indeed his character and conduct, I know not what other Bible we could expect, than one impossible to be understood, and framed to deceive. But, on this subject, we adopt the language of a distinguished advocate of the liberal system: "It is impossible that a teacher of infinite wisdom should expose those whom he would teach to infinite error. He will rather surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehension. A revelation is a gift of light; it cannot thicken and multiply our perplexities." *

2. It is the uniform testimony of the Bible, that the righteous love the truth, and that the wicked are opposed to it.

If, then, we can decide who are the wicked in the scriptural sense, which system they approve, and which they oppose, we have an inspired decision which is the faith delivered to the saints. But the Scriptures have decided that the irreligious and profane, and all persons of confirmed vicious habits, are wicked men. They have placed in the same class the ambitious, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God; and the voluptuous, who love pleasure more than God. Now, that some of this description of sinners are found among the professed believers of both systems, is admitted; but which system do they, as a body, prefer, and against which do they manifest unequivocal hostility? It requires no proof but universal observation to

* Channing's Sermon, second Baltimore ed., pp. 12, 13.

support the position, that the irreligious, immoral, and voluptuous part of the community, do prefer the liberal system, and are vehement in their opposition to the evangelical system.* If this assertion needs confirmation, assemble the pleasure-loving and licentious community of the world,—the patrons of balls, and theatres, and masquerades,—and let the doctrines of the evangelical system be preached plainly to them. Would they be pleased with them? Would they endure them? Do this class of the community, anywhere in the wide world where their numbers or influence preponderate, settle and support an evangelical minister? and if they support the preaching of any system of doctrines, is it not substantially the liberal system? Go to the voluntary evening association for conference and prayer, and which system will you hear breathed out in supplication? Then go to the voluntary evening association for gambling or inebriation, and which system, with its patrons, will you hear loaded with execration and ridicule? When a division is made in a town or parish, by the settlement of a minister of liberal or evangelical opinions, which side do a majority of the pious take, if

* The reader will observe, that we do not say, nor do we believe it to be true, that all, or even the majority, who professedly embrace the liberal system, are wicked in the sense explained. We know, and we gladly embrace the opportunity to acknowledge, that there are among them many whose talents and learning, whose amiable and generous dispositions, and whose devotedness to the public good, on many accounts, deserve our respect and commendation. There are, in this class of the community, many whom we not only respect and esteem, but whom, as connections and friends, we tenderly love. Our assertion is, that those who are wicked in the Scripture sense of that term do, as a body, whatever preaching they attend, and with whatever denomination they are classed, dislike the doctrines of the evangelical faith, and prefer those of the liberal system.

there be on earth any such thing as piety manifested by credible evidence? and which side do the wicked take, if there be on earth any such class of persons as wicked men,—proved to be such by their deeds? If a majority is obtained against evangelical opinions, was it ever known to be done by the most pious and moral part of the community, in opposition to the suffrages of the most irreligious and flagitious? * There

* It may not be known, to all who read this discourse, that, according to a late construction given to the laws of Massachusetts, the town or society may dispose of the funds which were given to the church; and dismiss or settle a minister without the concurrence, and in opposition to the suffrage, of the church: and that, in consequence of this decision, Unitarian ministers have often been settled by towns and societies in opposition to the efforts of evangelical churches; by which means the latter have been stripped of their funds, and exiled from their place of worship, and subjected to the necessity of forming a new society, and erecting another house of worship, unless they would consent to sit under Unitarian ministrations, and forego that instruction which they considered an important means of salvation. Now, in every one of these instances, it is believed that the immoral and irreligious part of the town or society have united with Unitarians; and, sometimes, if not always, have contributed to the formation of a majority which could not have been obtained without them.

If it should be said that these men united with Unitarians from a restless spirit of opposition to religious institutions generally, and not with any reference to doctrinal opinions, the answer is, that, when Unitarians obtain the ascendency, the external religious order of the society remains as it was, and is supported by these wicked men with more ardor than before. But when the evangelical part of the society with the church prevails, and the liberal part secedes, these same wicked men secede with them; so that, whether Unitarians prevail or act as a minority, the irreligious and profligate uniformly act with them; and never, in any case, act with the evangelical party. The wicked, then, will *support* religious order under Unitarian auspices, and, with Unitarians, will *abandon* it under evangelical auspices. Does this look like a mere restless opposition to religious order, without reference to doctrinal opinions? Are Unitarians so notoriously and always opposed to religious order, as to attach the

is, then, some powerful cause, of universal operation, which arrays the irreligious part of the community against the evangelical system. But, according to the Bible, of two opposing systems, one of which must be true, that which the wicked approve is false, and that which they oppose and hate is true; — "for he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

3. The evangelical system produces the same effects, universally, as were produced by the faith delivered to the saints.

The maxim, that *the same cause, in the same circumstances, will produce the same effect*, is as true in the moral as in the natural world; the laws of mind, and the operation of moral causes, being just as uniform as the laws of matter. The Gospel, the greatest moral cause which ever operated in the world, is the same now as in the apostolic age; and the heart of man, civilized or uncivilized, is also the same. So that this great cause is operating now in substantially the same circumstances as it did in the primitive age; — for the heart of man is the moral world, and is the same now as in the time of the apostles. If there be a system of doctrines, then, at the present time, whose effects are universally the same with those produced by the faith once delivered to the saints, that system, demonstrably, *is the faith* which was once delivered to the saints. Identity of moral effect proves identity of moral cause.

The illustration of the argument from effects must consist

enemies of religious institutions uniformly to their party? or is the evangelical system hated by wicked men because it is the truth, and the liberal system patronized by them because they, whose deeds are evil, "love darkness rather than light"?

of many particulars, and of matters of fact. The argument, therefore, can only be stated concisely, without attempting to answer every possible objection. The facts, too, may be regarded by some as invidious. I have only to say, that no fact will be stated as such which is not believed to be notoriously true, and, if denied, capable of unequivocal proof; and as to the invidious bearing of matters of fact, or of arguments, I am persuaded it is both a false delicacy and an unsound cause which would shrink from this test, and shield itself under forms of alleged decorum. But I must be allowed to believe, also, that no real decorum is violated by the statement of facts, or the pressure of arguments, where the object is important, the design honest, and the manner sober and respectful. Systems of religion, as well as of natural philosophy, may be brought to the test of actual experiment. "By their fruits shall ye know them." But if the moral world were, by the laws of decorum, closed against us, and we might only theorize without upon practical tendencies, and not enter it to collect and appeal to facts, we might contend earnestly, but certainly should contend to very little purpose. To the word and testimony of God, therefore, and to matters of fact, we appeal.

I observe, then, that the evangelical system occasions the same objections now which were occasioned by the faith once delivered to the saints.

Such an exhibition was given of old of the particular providence of God, as occasioned, on the part of thieves, and liars, and adulterers, and idolaters, the extenuating plea, "We are delivered to do all these abominations."* God governs the moral world by such irresistible influence, that

* Jer. 7 : 10.

crimes are as much a matter of physical necessity as rain and sunshine. Do I need to say to this audience, that the charge constantly urged against the decrees of God, as an article of the evangelical system, is that it destroys accountable agency, and makes men machines, and all actions necessary by an irresistible fatality? The faith delivered to the saints, then, and the evangelical faith, are perverted in this article exactly alike.

The ancient faith included an article which led the wicked among the Jews to extenuate their crimes by the allegation, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" * that is, "Sin in man is a physical property transmitted from father to son, as bones and sinews are, and alike inconsistent with choice or blame." And is not the same objection urged against the doctrine of original sin as contained in the evangelical system? The inspired answer to the objection of old was, That children are accountable only for their own voluntary exercises and deeds; and this is the reply returned now by the patrons of the evangelical system.

The doctrine of human depravity, as taught in the Bible, led the people, in a time of great wickedness, to say, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" † that is, "If we be dead in sin, to the exclusion of all spiritual life, how can we be free agents, and how can we help ourselves, or be justly blamed?" And, as if they had been told by the prophet that their death in sin was voluntary and criminal, and certain in its efficacy, they seem to say, "Well, if we are so wicked that we certainly shall pine away in our sins, how can we be to blame?

* Ezek. 18 : 2. † Ezek. 33 : 10.

If we shall not turn of ourselves, how can we turn? and of what use is ability that will never be exerted?" Now, are not these precisely the objections which are at this day constantly alleged against the doctrines of man's entire depravity, and moral inability, as articles of the evangelical system?

Our Saviour asserts the necessity of some great change to qualify a man for the kingdom of heaven, which, to a ruler in Israel, appeared mysterious, and even impossible. And in the evangelical system is there not a great change insisted on, as indispensable to salvation, to which masters in Israel now confess that they are strangers, and which they regard as impossible, without the destruction of free agency and accountability?

The manner of a sinner's justification was delivered to the saints in such terms as occasioned the objection that it made void the law, superseding the obligations and motives to a moral life, and leading to licentiousness. "Do we, then, make void the law through faith?" "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" And is not this precisely the objection which has been urged against the doctrine of justification by faith, as contained in the evangelical system, from the time of the Reformation to this day?

The saints were taught something concerning the sovereignty of God, as having mercy on whom he would, and punishing whom he would; — which produced the objection, "Why, then, doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" "If wicked men receive their destination as God appoints, why does he blame them? If it be his will that they perish, and they do perish, are they not obedient? and why does he find fault?" And is not this the objection which is urged, unceasingly, against the doctrine of election, as

taught in the evangelical system? To our reply, that the will of God as a moral rule to man, and the will of God as a rule of administration to himself in disposing of rebels, are distinct, the answer is, "Metaphysics! metaphysics! The will of God is the will of God; and if sinners act, in any sense, in accordance with any will of God, they are obedient; and he has no cause to find fault." Now, did the liberal exposition of the ninth of Romans ever produce, in the whole history of man, the objection which this chapter produced as written by the apostle? or do liberal preachers ever have occasion to adopt the reply of Paul to objections produced by their exposition? But the evangelical exposition produces invariably the same objection which the apostle encountered, and this objection receives invariably the same reply. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" "Shall a being of yesterday arraign the conduct of his Maker? Shall a rebel sit in judgment upon his God? Are not men rebels, justly doomed to die; and, in reference to their character and condition as condemned criminals, all clay of the same lump? And is not the discretion of God, to pardon or reprieve, as absolute as that of the potter over his clay, to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor? Do you object, that the punishment threatened is unjust? But how could God make a vessel of *mercy* of one whose punishment would be unjust; or a vessel of *wrath* of one whose punishment would be undeserved? Do you call men impotent, because they are compared to clay; or assert that the sovereignty of God, in saving some, *causes*, and renders unavoidable, the destruction of others? We reply, those who perish perish *for their sins*, for which they might have been justly punished, without an offer of pardon. They might, if they would, comply with the terms of pardon, and are punished

for rejecting them. Nor are they cut down in haste. With much long-suffering they are endured, while, by despising the riches of the goodness of God, they *fit themselves* for destruction." Such is the evangelical reply; and such, as we understand his language and argument, is the reply of Paul.

It was objected to the Gospel, and, in the early age, conceded, that few embraced it but the poor, and the common people. "To the poor the Gospel is preached." "Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed on him?" "The common people heard him gladly." "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." Celsus, in the second century, exulted in the fact that so few in the higher classes of society had professed Christianity; and poured contempt upon the cause, as patronized only by mechanics and vulgar people.* Now, is it not notorious, that the liberal system of doctrines, unpatronized by the civil power, has never been the religion of the common people in any country, but rather the religion of men of philosophical minds and literary habits? that is, the evangelical system has been chiefly patronized by that class of society which patronized the faith delivered to the saints; while the opposite system has more commonly relied for patronage on the arm of government, and on that class of men in society who, as a body, rejected the Gospel. A late writer in this country, of high reputation on the liberal side, says, "It is not to be doubted that, throughout our country, a very large proportion of those men who, for their talents, and learning, and virtues,

* Are there no attempts making to create an impression now that the liberal system is patronized peculiarly by persons in high life, by men of taste and talents, of wealth and refinement; and that the opposite system is fast going down, to be the religion of the common people only, and of the poor?

have the most influence in the community, and have it in their power to do the most towards giving a right direction to the public feeling and the public sentiment, are dissatisfied with the Calvinistic and Trinitarian form in which they have had religion presented to them; but are prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions by an unwillingness to encounter opposition and obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful."* The evangelical system in this country, then, is extensively embraced by the same classes which embraced the Gospel; and is extensively disapproved by that class of men who rejected the Gospel.†

* Dr. Ware's Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists, pp. 146, 147.

† If, to any, it should seem improbable that the unlearned and obscure should be more likely to have the truth than men of talents and learning, we are ready to admit that the apprehension would be just, if the perception of the truth depended exclusively upon capacity and knowledge. But if, as the Bible declares, the truth is so plain that the feeble and unlearned are able to perceive it, and its rejection is caused chiefly by the state of the heart; and, if talents, and learning, and wealth, and power, occasion self-sufficiency, and ambition, and love of pleasure, with the cares of this world, diverting the attention from the truth, and increasing the prejudice of the heart against it; then men in the highest orders of society are not as likely to have the truth as the common people: for the heart governs the understanding; and the peculiar aversion of learned and worldly men to the truth throws more darkness upon it than their superior intelligence serves to dispel, and creates a greater impediment to the perception of the truth than is occasioned by any relative deficiency of capacity and knowledge among the common people. The argument, however, does not demand this explanation; for we do not infer the truth of the evangelical system from the fact that either class is more likely to have the truth; but from the fact that the same sort of men reject the evangelical system now who rejected the Gospel, and the same sort embrace it now who embraced the Gospel: furnishing a strong presumptive argument that the evangelical system and the Gospel are the same, because they produce the same effects.

The faith delivered to the saints occasioned a virulent hatred. It was not hatred of it as false, arising from an ardent love of truth; for Pharisees and Sadducees could tolerate each other, and Pagans could tolerate thirty thousand gods, with all their lust and blood. And is not the evangelical system encountered by a virulence of opposition in circumstances which show that it cannot arise from the love of truth or hatred of error? None will pretend that the effects of the evangelical system are as deplorable as the effects of idolatry in its present forms. The evangelical system has produced no temple of impure resort; no gratifications of lust enjoined as acts of worship; no blood of human victims; no burning of widows, or drowning of infants; no self-inflicted penal tortures. And yet, such is the hatred of many to the evangelical system, that they oppose, deliberately, all attempts to extend it to the heathen; and on the ground, avowedly, that they had rather the heathen would remain as they are, than adopt the evangelical system. In the face of all the absurdity, and obscenity, and blood of idolatry, not a few have declared that they would not lift a finger to convert the whole pagan world to the evangelical faith, or words to that effect. They speak kindly of infidels, Mahometans, and pagans; and fiercely of all which breathes the spirit of the evangelical system. Such asperity the faith delivered to the saints occasioned in the apostolic age, and such asperity the evangelical system occasions now.

The faith delivered to the saints produced a stricter morality than any contemporaneous system. Whether this be true of the evangelical system, is not to be decided by a comparison of the best characters on one side with the most defective on the other; or of individuals of good moral character on

both sides, of which it is admitted there are many.* Nor can the moral efficacy of the two systems be decided by the standard of public morality, where the evangelical system has prevailed in the early period of life, and exerted its influence upon the conscience, and in the formation of moral habits; or where it still prevails to such an extent as to exert a powerful modifying influence; and, especially, where the opposite system is of but recent public notoriety, and of limited extent. Great moral causes do not produce their effects immediately, nor upon every individual exactly the same effect. Their tendency and efficacy are to be looked for in those communities where the influence of the two systems has been the most unmingled, and of the longest duration; and also in those obvious changes in a community which, as one or the other prevails, become apparent. With these explanations in view, I remark that the superior moral efficacy of the evangelical system is a matter of unequivocal concession. In an article on predestination in the British Encyclopedia, written, it is said, by Robert Forsyth, Esq., a learned civilian, and an infidel, after an account of the Calvinistic and Arminian systems, in which the preference is given to the latter, it is said, "There is one remark which we think ourselves in justice bound to make. It is this: that, from the earliest ages down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient Stoics, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists and Jansenists, compared with that of their antagonists, the Epicureans, the Sadducees, the Arminians and the Jesuits, we shall find that they have excelled, in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respecta-

* We desire all that is said on this subject to be understood with the same explanation which we have made on p. 250.

ble virtues; and have been the highest honor to their own age, and the best models for imitation to every succeeding age." This is the testimony of a philosopher to the different moral effects of the two systems, from the time of Augustine, at least, to the present day.

Dr. Priestley, who will not be suspected of partiality for the evangelical system, says that those who hold the evangelical doctrines "have less apparent conformity to the world, and seem to have more of a real principle of religion." He says, also, "Though Unitarian dissenters are not apt to entertain any doubt of the truth of their principles, they do not lay so much stress upon them as other Christians do upon theirs. Nor, indeed, is there any reason why they should, when they do not consider the holding of them to be at all necessary to salvation. They, therefore, take much less pains to make proselytes, and are less concerned to inculcate their principles upon their children, their servants, and their dependents in general. From this principle it is that great numbers, becoming Unitarians in the church of England, and even among the clergy, do not feel the impropriety and absurdity, to say nothing more harsh, of continuing to countenance a mode of worship which, if they were questioned about it, they would not deny to be, according to their own principles, idolatrous and blasphemous. Such persons, also, having no zeal for speculative religion, merely because they have no zeal for religion in general, their moral conduct, though decent, is not what is deemed strict and exemplary."*

In a periodical publication of high literary character, but of decided and known partiality to infidel opinions,† we find

* Discourses on various subjects, pp. 95, 96.

† Edinburgh Review.

the following statements: "Predestination, or doctrines much inclining towards it, have, on the whole, prevailed in the Christian churches of the west, since the days of Augustine and Aquinas. Who were the first formidable opponents of these doctrines in the church of Rome? The Jesuits,—the contrivers of courtly casuistry, and the founders of lax morality. Who, in the same church, inclined to the stern theology of Augustine? The Jansenists,—the teachers and the models of austere morals. What are we to think of the morality of Calvinistic nations, especially the most numerous classes of them, who seem, beyond all other men, to be most zealously attached to their religion, and most deeply penetrated with its spirit? Here, if anywhere, we have a practical and decisive test of the moral influence of a belief in necessarian opinions. In Protestant Switzerland, in Holland, in Scotland, among the English Nonconformists, and the Protestants of the north of Ireland, and in the New England States, Calvinism was long the prevalent faith, and is probably still the faith of a considerable majority. Their moral education was at least completed, and their collective character formed, during the prevalence of Calvinistic opinions. Yet where are communities to be found, of a more pure and active virtue?"

The accusations brought against evangelical writers and professors of religion, as requiring too much, or making no sufficient allowance for the weakness of human nature,—as rigid, austere enemies to innocent amusements,—as setting themselves up as better than their neighbors,—as righteous overmuch,—are also concessions in point: as are also the topics of ridicule, having reference, as they do, to the fastidious strictness of our ancestors, and of evangelical professors; to which we may add, the invidious names given to them, of

Puritan, Methodist, &c. It appears, then, as a matter of fact, that sound morality has never, in any country or age, been so elevated, and so extensively prevalent, as in those communities where the evangelical doctrines have been most universally believed, and most diligently taught, in families and schools, and in the sanctuary. It has been said, I am sensible, that these salutary effects of the evangelical system are produced by the truths contained in it in common with the liberal system, and in spite of the errors it embraces, and not *by* them. Does the truth, then, mingled with absurdity and falsehood, produce better effects than the truth simple and undefiled, as in the liberal system it is claimed to be? If it is the truth held in common by the evangelical and liberal systems which produces these good effects, why does not the liberal system alone produce the same effects? Allow me to suggest another solution. The evangelical system *requires* a stricter morality, enforced by more powerful motives. It adopts as its rule the moral law unmitigated, and its sanctions of eternal life and eternal death; — a law which the opposite system regards as too strict, and as set aside or mitigated in accommodation to human frailty; and whose sanctions are regarded as nothing, or as a salutary temporary discipline, or as annihilation, or as a matter of entire uncertainty. Now, is it strange that lax requisitions, and feeble, uncertain sanctions, do not produce the strict and vigorous morality of the law of God? What would human laws avail, should expositors and judges say, "Men are too wicked to allow of our interpreting the laws strictly; they must not be understood to mean exactly what they say, or to threaten exactly what they speak; perfect honesty, or truth, or purity, is not to be expected; a little fraud, and theft, and perjury, and violence, they allow, in accommodation to human

weakness; and threaten the *greater crimes* with *no punishment*, or only a beneficial temporary discipline, or exile from the state, or — we know not what" ?

Again, the evangelical system produces the best attendance on the public worship of God; and, of course, if the moral tendency of each were the same, that would produce the strictest and most general morality which commanded most extensively and deeply the attention of men. That the doctrines of the evangelical system do this, is claimed as true by Witherspoon, in his day, in Scotland; and by Overton, as true in England; and is admitted by English Unitarian writers, and denied by no one. It is also recently admitted in this country, as a matter of notoriety, "which none will question." It is accounted for, it must be acknowledged, in a way not favorable to the moral tendency of evangelical sentiments. It is on the ground of the intolerable strictness of liberal preaching; so strict and terrifying, that few, besides the more pious and exemplary, can abide it. The whole pleasure-loving, voluptuous, and dissipated community being driven, panic-struck by Unitarian denunciation, to the horns of the altar in evangelical churches; where, by "smooth preaching," and the hope of impunity in sin, their fears may be allayed, and their consciences quieted.*

The faith delivered to the saints produced revivals of religion. The preaching of it was attended with sudden anxieties, and deep convictions of sin, and sudden joy in believing, followed by reformation and a holy life. Nor was this the effect of miracles, or itself a miraculous event, in the common acceptation of the term. Miracles, merely, produced no such effects. It was under the preaching of the word that men

* See a pamphlet entitled "Smooth Preaching," written by a Unitarian.

were pricked in their hearts, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" And it was by the moral transformation which attended the apostolic answer to this question, and not by the power of miracles, that the Gospel defied opposition, and spread during the first three hundred years. There was no resisting it. Conviction attended the word, and a joyful obedience to the faith followed. The very chiefs of opposition exchanged their weapons of annoyance for the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit. And do not the same convictions of sin attend the preaching of the evangelical system; and does it not extend its victories in the same manner? By argument, merely, we convince few, and reclaim none. But there is an efficacy in evangelical preaching on the conscience and on the heart, against which neither learning, nor talents, nor prejudice, nor wrath itself, affords effectual protection. Multitudes who virulently hated, and verily thought that they ought to oppose, evangelical doctrines and revivals of religion, have been convinced of their mistake and their sin; and have embraced, joyfully, the doctrines which they reviled. Many who preach the liberal system can bear witness that they have lost, in this way, again and again, the very pillars of their societies. Defections of the same kind are frequent still, and clothe evangelical doctrines and revivals of religion with a terrifying power.

The faith delivered to the saints was efficacious in the sudden reformation of those who had been long under the dominion of vicious habits. The apostle enumerates the habits of crime which prevailed among pagans; and then, writing to the church of Corinth, says, "And such were some of you." But, while the liberal system despairs, professedly, of any sudden reformation from vicious habits, as against the estab-

lished laws of the moral world; and is unable to produce an instance in which a vicious person has been reformed by *abandoning the evangelical and adopting the liberal system;* and while reformation from vicious habits is a rare event, if it exist at all, under liberal preaching; it is a frequent event for profligates, on *abandoning their confidence in the liberal system and adopting the evangelical, to manifest a most salutary and abiding change of character and conduct.* In almost all the revivals of religion which are now prevailing in our land, there are some to whom it may be said, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed," &c. Dr. Chalmers, who preached the liberal system twelve years, and after this the evangelical, says, "And here I cannot but record the effect of an actual though undesigned experiment which I prosecuted for upwards of twelve years, among you. For the greater part of that time, I could expatiate on the meanness of dishonesty, on the villany of falsehood, on the despicable arts of calumny; in a word, upon all those deformities of character which awaken the natural indignation of the human heart against the pests and the disturbers of human society. Even at this time, I certainly did press the reformations of honor, and truth, and integrity, among my people; but I never once heard of any such reformations having been effected amongst them. If there was anything at all brought about in this way, it was more than ever I got any account of. I am not sensible that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and the proprieties of social life had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart, in all its desires and affections, from God,—it was not till reconciliation to him became the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exer-

tions,— it was not till I took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them,— it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit, given through the channel of Christ's mediatorship to all who ask him, was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependence and their prayers,— it was not, in one word, till the contemplations of my people were turned to these great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interest with God, and the concerns of its eternity, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but, I am afraid, at the same time, the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations."*

The faith delivered to the saints produced a spirit of missions. On the day of Pentecost the number of disciples was one hundred and twenty. And on that day the scales of Jewish prejudice fell from their eyes, and the spirit of missions descended upon their hearts; and, in three hundred years, without colleges, or theological seminaries, or the press, or governmental aid, but in opposition to its dire hostility, they evangelized the world. And are not the great movements now making to evangelize the world conducted chiefly under the auspices and by the charities of those who adopt substantially the evangelical system? Are not all the denominations in the world who believe in the Divinity of Christ and his atonement, in the depravity of man and his need of a moral renovation by the Spirit, and in the doctrine of justification by faith and future eternal punishment, more or less engaged in the work of missions? And is there, in the wide

* Chalmers' Farewell Discourse addressed to his parishioners of Kilmany, in his series of Discourses, pp. 110, 111, 112.

world, a denomination which rejects these doctrines, that is thus engaged? And is this system, which does nothing to evangelize the world, the Gospel; and that which does all that is done in accordance with the efforts of the primitive church, not the Gospel?

The faith delivered to the saints produced a piety of great solemnity, and ardor, and decision. It was a piety which took delight in the public worship of God, and in frequent private association for religious conference and prayer; a piety which included a deep solicitude, and made vigorous exertions, for the conversion of sinners, and experienced peculiar joy in the event; a piety which espoused openly the cause of Christ, encountered obloquy and the loss of all things, and stood undaunted in the face of danger, and produced joy unspeakable in the hour of death. And is not this precisely the same cast of piety which the evangelical system does, and which the liberal system does not, produce? Is not the deeply serious cast of the one regarded as constituting the evangelical a gloomy religion; and the lighter cast of the other, as giving to it vastly the preference on the score of cheerfulness? Is not the ardor of the one stigmatized as enthusiasm; and the cool, deliberate, intellectual cast of the other regarded as giving to it the enviable preëminence of a rational religion? Does not the one delight in, and the other deprecate, frequent voluntary associations for religious conference and prayer? Does not the one ridicule the supposed work of sudden conversion by the Spirit of God, and the other hold it in the highest estimation? Do not the converts to the one system, as far as they are called to it, disregard obloquy, and endure persecution; while, "throughout our country, a very large proportion of those men who, for their talents, and learning, and virtues, have the most influence in

the community, are dissatisfied with the Trinitarian and Calvinistic form in which they have had religion presented to them, but are *prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions by an unwillingness to encounter opposition, and obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful*"?* Are the sentiments which these men, "*all over our country*," are supposed to refer to the evangelical system, *the faith once delivered to the saints*, which, in the primitive church, produced a love to Jesus Christ so ardent, an avowal of his doctrine so undaunted, and an enterprise so efficient, as moved onward from conquering to conquer, through good report and evil, through honor and dishonor, through fire and blood? Alas! how is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed! But is it so? Is that the primitive faith which produces none of these consequences; and is that another, and an opposite faith, which produces them all?

With respect to the manner in which cordial believers in the two systems die, we have only to say, that, generally, professors of religion, of evangelical opinions, who have in life adorned their profession, approach their last hour without fear, and with great composure of mind, and with cheerful resignation. In some instances, they, even as the apostle Paul did, desire to depart and be with Christ; and, not unfrequently, their views, and affections, and anticipations of glory, render them exceedingly joyful in the last hour. Now, we ask, and refer for an answer to every man's observation, Is this the manner in which liberal opinions enable those to die who cordially embrace them? If some of this description meet death without fear, are not many terrified at his

* Dr. Ware.

approach? If some are tranquil, are not more agitated? If some manifest resignation, do not a far greater number cling with unyielding grasp to life, or manifest only the resignation of necessity? And are there any who by the liberal system are inspired with such love for Christ as to desire earnestly to depart and be with him? And, especially, are there any whose views, and affections, and anticipations of glory, render their death-bed a scene of the most exalted joy?

The faith delivered to the saints was attended, from the beginning to the end, with an unwavering confidence of its truth. False Christs and false prophets arose, but they could not "deceive the elect." Winds of false doctrine blew, but they scattered only the chaff; some also made shipwreck of the faith, but it was not the saints. There were heresies early; and it was needful there should be, that they which were approved might be manifest. And they were manifest; for the last apostle that remained testified, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us." But to those who adhered to the faith, he said, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things;"* that is, You know the truth of all those doctrines which some have rejected. Now, it is admitted that some patrons of the evangelical system abandon it. But it will not be denied that, as a general fact, they hold the same system of truth to the end, modified, explained, and proved, with some variation; but the same system, undeniably. But can it be said of the patrons of the liberal system, as a body, that their system, first and last, is the same? Can it be said of an individual,

* 1 John 2: 19, 20.

scarcely, that he continues to embrace the same system through life? Dr. Priestley has told us that he was first a Calvinist, and that he successively embraced, and abandoned, in his way downward to low Socinianism, all the intervening systems; and did not know how long he should maintain his existing faith, or what would come next. The same course has been travelled over by liberal critics and learned expositors in Germany: and, in this country, it is begun, it is believed, by most, and completed by many, who adopt the liberal system. Is it not notorious that evangelical men are reproached as being singularly confident that they only are right, and that Unitarians profess to have arrived at certainty *chiefly* in respect to the *falsehood of the evangelical system;* while, in relation to their own, there are many points on which they have not *had time* to make up their minds, and concerning which, with *other wise and great and good men*, they continue to doubt? Indeed, it might appear unseemly for men who had discovered that four out of five of their systems of belief, deliberately adopted, were wrong, to entertain a very high opinion of the powers of their *own* reason, at least, or to be confident of the truth of their fifth or sixth opinion, in respect to the great points of revealed doctrine. But where, among these changing men, "ever learning" their *past errors*, "and never coming to the knowledge of the truth,"—where is that unction from the Holy One which the saints possessed, and its attendant knowledge of all things?*

* A writer of eminence, in a sermon from 1 Cor. 13: 10, delivered at an ordination,* assumes, without any attempt at exposition, or proof, that even the apostles *knew but in part:* from which has resulted "diversity of opinion," and the fact that, though of two opposite opinions both can-

* Dr. Ware's Sermon delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. William B. O. Peabody, at Springfield, 1820.

4. A departure from the faith delivered to the saints, producing divisions in the church, was denominated a heresy during the first three centuries.

This does not prove those doctrines to be false which the churches condemned, because churches and councils are not infallible; but it does prove the opinions denominated heretical to be novelties, and in opposition to the received opinion of the church until the time of their condemnation. The declaration of the primitive church that a doctrine is a heresy is a public, formal testimony as to what had been, until then, the received opinion of the churches.

The heretics themselves admitted, sometimes, that their opinions were novel, but contended that they were nevertheless true; or, more commonly, so explained them as to claim that

not be true, "they may both be innocent;" and that this imperfection of knowledge may have been designed "as a moral discipline," and "to give a larger scope and new occasion for the exercise of good feeling." It certainly would have been relevant and desirable that it should have been ascertained whether this *conceded ignorance* of the apostles respected doctrinal knowledge, or only experimental knowledge, begun in time, and to be consummated in heaven,— the *latter* seeming to be the subject of discourse, and not at all the former; — whether their *partial ignorance* of Christian doctrine had respect to a *partial revelation* of the doctrines of Christianity, or to the doctrines which are revealed; — if it respected revealed doctrines, whether their *ignorance* was owing to their indolence, or incapacity to understand, or to such obscurity in the revelation of them that even apostles could understand only a part of the doctrines which God had revealed. We cannot but admire, if it were partial doctrinal knowledge which is conceded by the apostles, how they should have drawn inferences from the fact so directly opposed to those which were drawn by this writer. The one inferring charity and moderation; the other, the duty of contending earnestly for the faith. The one anathematizing any man, or even an angel, who should preach any other Gospel; and the other inferring, from the same premises, the equal innocence of doctrinal truth and doctrinal falsehood.

they were not a departure from the received faith: uniting, of course, the testimony of heretics to that of the church, as to what had been the received opinion.

From the nature, then, and the known era of the several heresies in the primitive church, we may ascertain what was the antecedent faith of the church on the points to which they relate.

The doctrine of the incarnation of Christ was the received opinion of the church, when denied by the Gnostics, towards the close of the first century. The divinity of Christ was the received opinion of the church, when denied by Arius, A. D. 315; who, soon after, was condemned as a heretic, in a council of three hundred and eighty Fathers. And the doctrines of original sin, entire depravity, regeneration by special grace, and justification by faith, continued to be the received doctrines of the church until the time of Pelagius, about A. D. 400.

The doctrines of the evangelical system, then, commenced their journey down to us from the apostolic age: and as each doctrine of the liberal system encountered any one of them, *that* was declared by the church to be a novelty, and the other the antecedently received opinion of the church. Can this fact be reconciled with the supposition that the liberal system was the faith *first* delivered to the saints? Did all the churches, from the beginning, misunderstand the import of the Gospels and Epistles, and all the apostolic expositions of them; and misunderstand, systematically, and exactly alike, on all points, and in direct opposition to what Jesus Christ and the apostles intended to teach; and this, too, without concert, and throughout the Roman empire? Or, if the liberal was the system first delivered to the saints, could all the churches have exchanged it for the opposite system so

early, so silently, so unitedly, as to have the *whole truth* regarded as a novelty, and denounced as a heresy, in the second, and third, and fourth centuries? Dr. Priestley has, indeed, attempted to show that the liberal system was that which was actually delivered by Christ and his apostles to the saints, and that such a change as we have supposed did happen in the progress of two or three hundred years. But, besides the utter failure of his proof,* he might as well have attempted to show that the course of all the rivers in the Roman empire was reversed during the first three centuries of the Christian era, in opposition to the testimony of all the historians and naturalists of the empire, convened by public authority on purpose to inquire into the matter of fact.

5. It is a point decided by inspiration, that the martyrs who suffered under pagan and papal persecutions held the same faith; and that the faith which they held, and for which they suffered, is the faith which was delivered to the saints. The apostle John saw in vision, "under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."† It is called in another place "the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ."‡ These are the martyrs under pagan Rome. But with reference to those who suffered afterwards, under papal Rome, it is said, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."§ The faith, then, which the martyrs held under

* See Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley, by the Rev. Heneage Horsley, A. M. Also, a Vindication of the Doctrine of Scripture, and of the Primitive Faith concerning the Divinity of Christ, in reply to Dr. Priestley's History of Early Opinions, &c., by the Rev. John Jamieson, D. D., F. R. S., of Forfar.

† Rev. 6: 9. ‡ Rev. 12: 17. § Rev. 14: 12.

pagan and papal Rome, and for which they suffered, was the same; and was the WORD OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS. But we know, by evidence unequivocal and undeniable, that the doctrinal opinions of the martyrs under papal Rome were the doctrines of the evangelical system, and not those of the liberal system. They exist now upon historical records and in public creeds, and are denominated the doctrines of the Reformation. The doctrines of the Reformation, then, which we denominate the evangelical system, have the seal of heaven impressed upon them, as being the WORD OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS — THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

I am now to explain the manner in which the churches of our Lord should contend for the faith.

1. By a proper exercise of their civil influence.

The rights and duties of Christians, as members of a civil community, are not, it is believed, generally understood. As, in the first generations of New England, everything, almost, was done by civil government to promote religion, the idea has descended that Christians have *some influence* to exert, favorable to religion, through the medium of government, without the perception, exactly, how it is to be done, in the present altered state of things. Christians, now, in their civil capacity, are members of a great empire, whose administration cannot be modified in accommodation to local religious purposes. A multitude of denominations of Christians have arisen, also, each upon principles of religious liberty entitled to impartial protection; and excluding, in behalf of any, governmental favoritism. In this new state of things, Christians are perplexed, and know not what to do. They are afraid to withhold their efforts to benefit religion through the medium of government; and, environed by difficulties and dangers,

they are afraid to exert it. For my own satisfaction, in the first instance, I have been led to investigate the subject; and, though I have not found it unattended with difficulties, my mind rests in the following results:

(1.) Christians are not to attempt to control the administration of civil government in things merely secular.

This is what our Saviour refused to do, when he declined being a king, or ruler, or judge. It would secularize the church, as the same conduct secularized the church of Rome, and bring upon her, and justly, a vindictive reäction of hatred and opposition. When great questions of national morality are about to be decided, such as the declaration of war,—or, as in England, the abolition of the slave-trade, or the permission to introduce Christianity into India by missionaries,—it becomes Christians to lift up their voice, and exert their united influence. But with the annual detail of secular policy it does not become Christians to intermeddle, beyond the unobtrusive influence of their silent suffrage. They are not to "strive, nor cry, nor lift up their voice in the streets." The injudicious association of religion with politics, in the time of Cromwell, brought upon evangelical doctrine and piety, in England, an odium which has not ceased to this day.

(2.) It is equally manifest that Christians should not attach themselves exclusively to any political party, or take a deep interest in political disputes.

No party is so exclusively right as to render it safe for any man to commit his conscience to its keeping, and act implicitly according to its dictation. Nor can any party, in a popular government, be sufficiently secure from change, to render it safe to identify with it the interests of religion. Besides, if Christians enter deeply into political disputes, they

will be divided, and one denomination arrayed against another, in their prayers and efforts; and one Christian against another, in the same church. A spirit of party zeal creates, also, a powerful diversion of interest and effort from the cause of Christ; creates prejudices in Christians one against another: and, in the community, against the cause itself. It annihilates spirituality of mind; prevents a spirit of prayer, and efforts for revivals of religion: and renders Christians the mere dupes and tools of unprincipled, ambitious men. No sight is more grievous, or humiliating, than to see Christians continually agitated by all the great and little political disputes of the nation, the State, the city, and town, and village; toiling in the drudgery of ambition, and flowing hither and thither, like waves which have no rest, and cast up only mire and dirt. I am persuaded that there has been utterly a fault among Christians in this thing; and that there is no one particular in which it is more important that there should be a reformation.

(3.) It is plain, also, that no attempt should be made by Christians of one denomination to hinder the prosperity of other denominations, by any monopoly of governmental influence and favor.

The end of Heaven has been answered, in the powerful and direct aid given to the churches by the civil fathers of New England. Then it was needed, to lay foundations, to form habits, to surmount obstacles, and to carry the churches through the wilderness. But now it is not needed: and cannot be bestowed, in the manner it has been. All denominations of Christians must live, now, by a general impartial favor of government, and their own efforts.—the goodness of their cause, and the smiles of Heaven. The *favoritism* of government, in a free country, is an advantage too precarious,

also, to be employed safely by any denomination. For, such is the instability of popular governments, that their partial aid, if resorted to, might exalt at one time, and abandon and persecute at another. All denominations have an equal interest, now, in renouncing all attempts at securing the partial favor of government, and in insisting upon impartial protection and favor only.

Should any denomination, however, be so destitute of wisdom as to attempt to propagate its opinions and facilitate its progress by a monopoly of literary influence, through governmental favor, and by rendering their own sentiments a passport to places of honor and trust in the higher and subordinate stations of civil office and employment,—if in these and other ways they should seek to give to themselves, by the adventitious favor of government, a weight in the community, and an influence on the public mind, favorable to their own religious views, and adverse to those of other denominations,—in such case, civil and religious liberty would authorize and demand that all Christians of other denominations should withhold their suffrage from the ambitious sect who had perverted and abused the public confidence. This, by those who should experience the salutary admonition, would be deprecated, no doubt, as "*introducing religion into politics;*" but it would, in fact, be only a righteous effort to *put that religion out of politics* which they had unrighteously identified with them, and to place the religious rights and privileges of Christians upon an equality. When this had been accomplished, persons of worth, of any denomination, exempt from such sectarian bias as would abuse the confidence reposed in them, might enjoy the public favor.

(4.) I cannot perceive that churches are bound in point of duty, or required on the ground of policy, to confine their

suffrages exclusively to persons of their own denomination, or to regulate them exclusively with reference to piety or doctrinal opinions.

There are certain guarantees of integrity, and of security to the general interests of religion, which, as Christians, we are bound to require. There must be such a belief in the being of God, and of accountability and future punishment, as lays a foundation for the practical influence of an oath; such exemption from immorality as will render the elevated example of rulers safe to the interest of public morals; such general approbation of the Christian religion and its institutions as will dispose them to afford to religion the proper protection and influence of government; and such exemption from sectarian zeal as will secure from abuse the confidence of other denominations, and an administration impartial in its aspect upon all of them. But where these securities are given, I do not perceive that Christians are forbidden to repose confidence in men, for civil purposes, who do not profess religion, or afford evidence of piety. Men of piety are doubtless to be preferred, and greatly to be desired, other things being equal; but I cannot perceive that the qualifications for civil trust, and for membership in the church, are the same; and wherever they have been so regarded, the consequence has been, the intrusion of unsanctified men, by a lax examination, or by dispensing entirely with piety as a qualification for communion. As long as communion in the English church shall continue to be an indispensable qualification for office, so long will the tide of ambition roll through her interior, and damp the fire upon her altars. It was this mistake of our pious fathers, in making the terms of communion and civil trust the same, which produced the lax mode of admission to the churches of New England, followed by the long and dreadful declension from

evangelical doctrine and piety, which, in many churches, continues to this day; and the same course, persisted in, would perpetuate the same effects.

What, then, is the ground which the churches ought to take? It is the high ground of Christian temper, Christian principle, and Christian practice. It is a great mistake, if any suppose that their conduct in relation to things spiritual may be regulated by one rule, and in things civil by another. The Gospel furnishes Christians with rules for their entire direction in all things. In this respect, as well as others, "the law of the Lord is perfect;" and every man of God is, by his Bible, "thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

Let Christians, then, not under the influence of party zeal, but in the fear of God, as those who must give an account, withhold their suffrages from men whose known opinions destroy the practical influence of an oath, whose open hostility to all religion renders it unsafe and sinful to confide in them, whose immoral habits would contaminate the public morality, or whose sectarian zeal would incapacitate them for a liberal and impartial legislation on the subject of religion; and when this is done, let them no longer know "any man after the flesh," but, without reference to political party, or doctrinal creed, vote for those who are in other respects worthy of their confidence. Every community needs in its bosom men of cool and uncommitted feeling, to allay the fierceness of party strife, and to come forth for the salvation of the nation, on emergencies of danger. And why should not a host of such men, lovers of their country and their God, be found in the church, instituted by Heaven to promote peace on earth and good will to men? The interests of science and literature are regarded as too important to be identified with

political parties; and are permitted to enjoy the retreat of the groves, far from the noise of strife and war. And why should not the interests of religion be allowed to stand aloof from the conflicts of ambition, and the din of controversy? As political animosities rage in free governments, and competitions for office and power are conducted, and ever will be, till the world is far better than it now is, every Christian may say of political partisans as Jacob said of Simeon and Levi: "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations: O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united."

The effect of such a retreat by Christians from the annual details of party strife, and of the silent exertion of evangelical influence in the exercise of the right of suffrage, would be attended with the happiest effects. The political alienation of Christians would cease, and be followed by the increase of brotherly love. Their diversion from religious enterprise would cease, and they would have more time and more zeal for the service of Christ. The prejudice against religion occasioned by their political officiousness would be avoided; and that influence which before was worse than lost in the turmoils of party, would be sanctified, and devoted to the cause of Christ.

In all the competitions for political elevation, of which there will always be many in free governments, the suffrage of a Christian community, held in reserve, to be exercised under the influence of conscience, and a cool, uncommitted discretion, would have an influence highly salutary to the State, and to the interests of piety and morality. As long as Christians are divided, and will vote blindly, under the influence of a political mania, no individual fears the consequence of irreligion or immorality; and no party fears the consequence of them in

their candidates for office. But if Christians retire from unhallowed competitions, to bestow their suffrage by the dictation of an enlightened conscience, they will hold an amount of suffrage not to be lightly regarded or despised on either side. In this there is no electioneering, no officious meddling, and no violence. Christians exercise their own civil rights, under the guidance of their own consciences, enlightened by the Word of God; and, in doing it, allay the violence of party, elevate the standard of morality, and secure to religion all the protection that it needs, and to their country, so far as their influence can avail, an administration of the government devoted to the public good, and not to the interests of a party. Experience has evinced the vanity of all hopes of religious and moral purity from the influence of civil governments directly: government itself needs to be brought under the influence of Christian principle, and to be imbued with Christian feeling; an event which can be accomplished only as the public opinion shall be purified and regulated by religious and moral principle. But this silent leavening of the mass can be the result only of a general increase of religion, and the proper exercise by Christians of their civil influence. I would say, therefore, in the language of Wilberforce, "Let true Christians, with becoming earnestness, strive in all things to recommend their profession, and to put to silence the vain scoffs of ignorant objectors. Let them boldly assert the cause of Christ, in an age when so many who bear the name of Christians are ashamed of Him; and let them consider as devolved on them the important duty of suspending for a while the fall of their country, and, perhaps, of performing a still more extensive service to society at large; not by busy interference in politics, *in which it cannot but be confessed there is much uncertainty*, but rather by that

sure and radical benefit of restoring the influence of religion, and of raising the standard of morality. Let them cultivate a catholic spirit of universal good will, and of amicable fellowship towards all those, of whatever sect or denomination, who, differing from them in non-essentials, agree with them in the grand fundamentals of religion. Let them countenance men of real piety, wherever they are found; and encourage in others every attempt to repress the progress of vice, and to revive and diffuse the influence of religion and virtue. Let their earnest prayers be constantly offered, that such endeavors may be successful, and that the abused long-suffering of God may still continue to us the invaluable privilege of vital Christianity."

2. The churches of our Lord are to maintain the faith delivered to the saints, by inculcating it early, and earnestly, upon children.

Catechetical instruction was adopted, universally, by the primitive Christians; was practised by the Waldenses as their safeguard against the seductions of the papists; was resorted to by the churches of the Reformation, and continued by the churches of New England; and has uniformly been followed by the revival or decline of religion, as it has been persisted in or neglected. It is preëminently important that there be in the church symbols of evangelical doctrine, associated with the earliest recollections of her children.

The objection, that children cannot understand the doctrines of the Bible, is unfounded. They can understand them, in their order, as early as they can understand anything. The being and character of God, the doctrines of accountability, depravity, and the necessity of a moral change, are comprehended by children early, and with great ease. But even if they do not, at the time, understand the *words* they commit

to memory, will they never understand them, or derive benefit from them? Would any parent be willing to risk the commitment by his children of obscene songs, because, at the time, their import was not understood? Would not the words be a leaven of impurity in the memory, to contaminate the mind as it opened to the comprehension of their meaning? So the doctrines of the Bible, though deposited as a dead letter, may become a fountain of life to the soul, when it shall open the eye of its understanding upon them.

The plan of leaving children uninstructed in religion, that they may come with an unbiased mind to the subject, is impracticable. An evil heart is, itself, a powerful bias against the truth; and if the servants neglect to sow good seed, the enemy will certainly sow tares. The sure consequence of leaving children to grow up without religious instruction will be irreligion, and prejudice against the truth. Whenever, therefore, our doctrinal catechisms are laid aside, a breach, wide as the sea, is opened for the enemy to come in.

3. The faith delivered to the saints must be maintained by means of literary institutions, regulated and controlled by its sanctifying power.

It is evident that the youth of our colleges cannot be governed without efficient moral influence. In our free country, neither military coercion, nor civil power, nor ambition, will alone avail to subdue the vicious propensities, and direct the principles and habits, of the young. Moral influence must be employed; and the most powerful moral influence is that exerted by evangelical religion. This system of faith imposes a stricter rule of duty, and enforces its requisitions by more powerful sanctions, attended, when faithfully exhibited, by the influences of the Spirit, giving them effect on the heart. The salutary influence of revivals, and of the beneficiaries of the

churches, in our colleges, in promoting among the young men generally purity of morals, and increasing the facilities of government, is manifest and great.

Another proof of the necessity of such an influence is found in the destructive consequences of a perverted literature. Talents and learning are moral power, and cannot be arrayed against religion without disastrous effects. If these, then, are beheld chiefly in alliance with error, and the truth associated chiefly with uncultivated intellect, how great and powerful will be the prepossession in favor of error, and against the truth! We may as well expect the application of all the mechanical powers in the natural world without effect, as of the energies of talent and literature in the moral world without effect. A reliance on the power of God, in such circumstances, is presumption; for it supposes, in opposition to the declarations of his Word and his providences, that he will protect by miracle, without the use of means.

The opinion that God has dispensed with learning and talents as auxiliaries in the work of defending and propagating the faith has been adopted hastily, and without reason. The foolishness of preaching, by which he saves, is not foolish preaching; and the weak things which he employs to confound the mighty are not uncultivated intellect and ignorance. The principal defenders of the faith in the primitive church were men of vigorous minds and extensive knowledge. The apostles could speak in every tongue; and, besides having been instructed by Christ, were, by the Holy Ghost, reminded of his words, and taught what to say. Augustine was, in his day, a host. Luther and Calvin were men of might. And the Reformers, generally, had the advantage of their antagonists in literature and science. That none should preach the Gospel who have not had the advantages of a

liberal education, we do not assert, nor believe. But that such should be the ordinary qualifications of ministers, we do steadfastly believe.

Is it necessary to add, that it is the duty of the church, universally, to withhold her sons from those literary institutions which are hostile to the doctrines of grace? It is ludicrous to pretend that "no doctrines in particular are taught" in such institutions, and that no influence is exerted to bias the minds of young men against the evangelical system. We might as well speak of a sword with no edge in particular, or a book containing no ideas in particular, as of religious instruction without any religious doctrines in particular. Besides, what shall we think of churches, associated on purpose to train up youth in the doctrines of Christianity, sending them where "no doctrines in particular are taught"? And is it true — can it without a miracle be true — that no influence is exerted, in such institutions, to pervert the minds of young men? Will the faculty, whose opinions are known and revered, as they are wont to be, by their pupils, and who hold in their hands the distribution of literary honors, have no influence in forming a popular sentiment hostile to the doctrines of the Reformation? Will this atmosphere of opposition and ridicule, in which a youth whose previous education has been evangelical is sent to live, and move, and have his being, exert no influence in unsettling his opinions? Possibly, he may not make shipwreck of the faith; but is this a justification for exposing him to temptations which to nineteen in twenty will prove fatal? How many pious parents already weep over blasted hopes! How many children of the church have, through the perversion of their talents and acquirements, become her most powerful adversaries! Were the evils confined to the unhappy victims, it would be deplorable;

for what shall it profit a man if his son gain the highest point of literary attainment and renown, and lose his soul? But many parents of evangelical opinions, influenced by the example of Christians, may send their children, who are not themselves beyond the reach of perversion. And all may have brothers and sisters, and companions and relatives, on whom they may exert a fatal influence, and thus become the instruments of an extended diversion of the public opinion.

4. The faith delivered to the saints is to be contended for by a faithful exhibition of its sanctions.

These are contained in the punishment threatened to the rejection of truth, as a crime; and the calamities inseparable from the rejection of it, if it were not a crime. The doctrines of revelation are not articles of speculation merely, but principles of moral government. They disclose the law, the gospel, and the providence of God. They are declared, also, to be so plain, that they can no more be misunderstood, innocently, than darkness can be mistaken, innocently, for light; bitter, for sweet; thorns, for grapes; thistles, for figs; tares, for wheat; or ashes, for bread. But if there were no criminality attached to the rejection of the truth, the calamities of its rejection would still remain. If we could separate criminality from sin, it would still be a principle of misery; for enmity against God, selfishness, malevolence, pride, envy and revenge, will bring spiritual death upon the soul, as really as to leap the precipice, or plunge into the devouring fire, will destroy the body. And thus it is with fundamental error in doctrine. The character, law, gospel, and providence of God, are realities, as unmodified by human opinion as the laws of the natural world; and the calamitous consequences of adopting false opinions on these subjects, and of opposition of heart to the true character and government of God, are the same, as calamities, whether guilt has been incurred thereby,

or not. "To be carnally minded," in either case, "is death." He that goes into eternity in a state of opposition to the character and government of God is undone, whether guilty or not guilty. It is an admitted fact, that repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are, somehow, indispensable to render it consistent for God to pardon sin. But this repentance, and this faith, are definite realities; and, if a mistake were not criminal, *that* which is not repentance cannot have the *effect* of repentance, and *that* which is not faith cannot have the *effect* of faith, in rendering it consistent for God to pardon sin; however innocently the mistake may come to pass.

Besides, men, as sinners, must be sanctified, as well as pardoned, to fit them for heaven. But their sanctification must be accomplished, not by physical power exclusively, but by the instrumentality of the truth. It no more belongs to omnipotence to give to error the effect of truth, on the minds of free agents, than to cause a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time. A law without rewards or punishments cannot *be made* as influential on moral beings as a law with sanctions, any more than vacuity in the scales can *be made* as weighty as lead. "Thou shalt kill" cannot be *made* to have the same effect as the prohibition, "Thou shalt not kill." And "The soul that sinneth, it shall *not* die," cannot be *made* to affect the mind of a sinner like the denunciation, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." In like manner, the declarations, "The carnal mind is *not* enmity against God;" "if a man be *not* born again, he shall see the kingdom of God;" "he that doth *not* repent and believe shall be saved;" "he that is *without* holiness shall see the Lord;" and "he that doth *not* deny himself shall be a disciple of Christ;" cannot be made to have the same effect in exciting fear, or producing conviction of sin, or repent-

ance, or faith, as the contrary declarations. It is idle to talk of the power of God, or of the goodness of God, or of the mercy of God, or of his paternal character; we may as well rely on these attributes to prevent the effects of fire, or water, or poison, on the natural body. We may as well play with the adder, or meet the hungry lion, or leap the precipice, or stand before the cannon's mouth, confiding in God's goodness and our sincerity, to prevent harm, as to disregard or oppose all the great laws of his moral government, and our own moral nature, and expect that his power and goodness will avert the consequences, and save us, without the truth, or by the instrumentality of error.

Believing, then, as we do, that the evangelical system is the faith delivered to the saints, *the very Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;* and that the rejection of it is fatal, on the ground of crime; and fatal, in the nature of things, as moral beings are constituted; we are bound to preach this Gospel, as, in our opinion, indispensable to salvation. We are bound to do this, because, to do otherwise would be to preach the Gospel without sanctions, which would render it of none effect. We are bound to do it, also, because, as men are constituted, *opinion* has influence, and we owe its efficacy to Christ, and to the souls of men. The Gospel, if it had been preached without sanctions by Christ and his apostles, would have excited little opposition, and have done little good. The Scribes and Pharisees would not have been offended at Christ, but would have admired his catholic spirit, if to his doctrine he had subjoined, "These are my opinions; — but those who differ from me are doubtless honest and sincere, and will be mercifully accepted by our heavenly Father." Idolaters, also, would have added Christ, as a god, to their thirty thousand gods, if he, in return, would have given to

each, and to his worshippers, the right hand of fellowship. So it is, precisely, in respect to the doctrines of the evangelical system. "*Charity*" would "*suffer long*" and be as "*kind*" *to us* as to Mahometans, or infidels, or the diversities of liberal men, if the concession could only be made by us, that those who reject these doctrines may be innocently and safely wrong. It is holding them *as essential to salvation, and all opposite systems as fatal*, that overcomes the patience of *charity itself*, and brings upon us the retribution of invective and obloquy. All this, however, only discloses the efficacy upon the consciences of men of preaching the truth with its sanctions, and increases our obligations and our motives to do it faithfully.

I would not encumber the subject here with the question, What will become of the heathen, if the faith delivered to the saints be essential to salvation? For, if it were true that those to whom it has not been delivered may be saved without it, it would not follow that those can be to whom it has been delivered, and by whom it has been rejected.

Nor is it needful to adjust the seeming or real differences of those Christians who hold, some to more and others to less of the system. For the question is not, *How much of this system* may be misunderstood, consistently with sanctification by that which is still embraced? but, Can it be rejected entirely by those who possess the Bible, and they who do it be sanctified without it, and saved by the instrumentality of error? Nor is it a question of any consequence whether it be *possible* for a man to be saved who rejects this system, if it be, in fact, as we believe it to be, the Gospel. For what if it were possible for a man who rejects it to be saved,— does that prove that he will be saved? And do we need no higher

evidence that we shall be saved than is implied in the fact of its bare possibility?

Nor is the duty of preaching this faith, as indispensable to salvation, affected at all by the consideration that we are fallible, and may possibly be mistaken in our opinions: for, so long as we believe, whether correctly or not, we must act according to our belief. Nor is this sitting in the judgment seat, and "dealing damnation round the land," at all more, than our believing certain human productions to be the laws of the State, and that some men have transgressed them and will be punished, is sitting in the judgment seat, and dealing damnation round the land.

Nor is it bigotry. Bigotry consists in a blind attachment to opinions, from inclination, passion, and prejudice; and may be manifested in as high a degree in the avowal and propagation of liberal as evangelical opinions.

Neither can I perceive in what respect it is uncharitable. For what is charity? Not a decision of the understanding, but an affection of the heart. It is *love — good will — benevolence.* But while it leads us to hope, as long as there is room to hope, that a fellow-creature is not guilty, and in danger, it does not lead us to resist competent evidence of the fact, or to conceal from him our opinion of his character, or our sense of his danger. The more we love him, the more plain will be our note of admonition, the more earnest our entreaty, and the more vigorous our exertion to save his soul from death. Charity does not consist in creeds of strict or liberal import, but in the temper of heart with which they are adopted and propagated. It is very possible that a liberal creed may be associated with a haughty and vindictive temper, and what is called a severe creed with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. "Charity suffereth long and is

kind" *under severe provocations;* "envieth not" *a successful competitor for popular favor;* "vaunteth not itself" — *does not trumpet its own virtues and praises;* "is not puffed up" *with vain self-estimation;* "doth not behave itself unseemly," *by a light and vain deportment;* "seeketh not her own" — *has no pleasure in monopolies;* "is not easily provoked" *by the perverseness of men;* "thinketh no evil," *plotteth none, suspecteth none;* "rejoiceth not in iniquity," *as if the means could sanctify the end;* but "rejoiceth in the truth," *as having to do with the affections;* "beareth all things," — *revilings and misrepresentations, with meekness;* "believeth all things" *just as they are revealed, as those knew all things who had an unction from the Holy One;* "endureth all things," — *temptations with fortitude, afflictions with submission.*

5. The faith delivered to the saints is to be defended by earnest written discussion.

The opinion that controversy is of no use, because disputants never convince each other, is derived from a very limited view of the subject. It is nearer the truth to say, that no great advance has ever been made in science, religion, or politics, without controversy. And certain it is, that no era of powerful theological discussion has ever passed away, without an abiding effect in favor of truth. The discussions of Augustine, of Luther, and of Calvin, are felt to this day; and the controversial writings of Edwards have been to error what the mounds and dykes of Holland have been to the sea. One danger only is to be guarded against: it is that of diminishing, in the public mind, the high sense which has existed of the criminality and danger of error. If our personal attachments, and literary friendships, and courtesy of

manner, should bring down the high and holy subject of contending for the faith to a cool and amicable trial of classical and polemical skill, the public feeling would soon be chilled, and fall to this low level of practical estimation. Every discussion of the doctrines of Christianity should, evidently, be conducted with benevolence; but in a language, and in a manner, which carry home to the hearts of men the full impression of our deep conviction, both of the criminality and the danger of rejecting the truth.

6. Another means of defending the faith is to be found in a careful maintenance of the apostolic tenure of membership in the visible church.

This, there is no reason to doubt, consisted in a credible profession of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And as long as these continued to be the terms of admission, the primitive churches continued in a healthful state. But when, as a matter of courtesy or of authority, the tenure of membership was altered, and the protection and control of civil government began, a door was opened at which the state entered, unsanctified, the church of God; and, in the progress of ages, reared the most terrific despotism of superstition and ambition that ever provoked God, or oppressed men. At the Reformation, the same interposition of government modified the terms of admission; and, by the secular and unsanctified mass thrown upon the church, hindered its consummation, and prepared the way for that swift and great declension from evangelical doctrine and vital godliness which followed.

When our fathers came to this land, in their flight from persecution, it was, primarily, that they might build the church, according to the evangelical pattern, of lively stones only; and, in the beginning, the tenure of membership was a

professed belief in the doctrines of the Reformation, attended by credible evidence of regeneration. This strict tenure of membership, about the close of the first generation, became a subject of complaint by those who were excluded from office, because they could not conscientiously join the church; and by those whose children, on the same account, remained unbaptized; and by emigrants from England, of less strictness of religious sentiment, who came over after the first perils of settlement were past. These, united, constituted a strong party in the state, who were for admitting all persons of a regular life to full communion, on their making a profession of their belief in the Christian religion, without any inquiry with respect to a change of heart; and for regarding all who had been baptized in infancy as, on that ground, entitled, in adult age, to membership in the church. The legislators generally, and some ministers, favored the liberal side of the question. The innovation was, however, strenuously resisted by the rest of the clergy, and by the churches almost universally. While hosts without assembled, and murmurs long and loud were heard, they stood to defend the gates of Zion from the intrusion of the stranger. At length, however, they were overpowered by numbers. The gates of the holy city were burst open, and the world rushed in, and took possession of the baptismal font and the sacramental host. Thus, at a stroke, was prostrated the system of church organization established by Heaven to perpetuate pure doctrine and vital piety; and, from this time, for three-quarters of a century, both declined in a manner the most rapid and alarming which the churches of New England ever witnessed.

In the course of ten years after this event, a suspension of divine influence in the conviction and conversion of sinners

took place, so signal and alarming, as induced the Legislature to call a synod to inquire into and report the causes. The alarm was great, and the lamentations loud and many. Mr. Stoughton, in an election sermon, 1660, said: "Alas, how is New England in danger, this day, to be lost, even in New England,— to be buried in its own ruins! How sadly may we lament that all are not *Israel* that are *now* of Israel! How is the good grain diminished, and the chaff increased!" In 1683 the minister of Weymouth declared that "A great failure has taken place in the work of conversion, in the frequency of a credible profession of religion, and in the tokens of formality, hypocrisy, and apostasy." Dr. Increase Mather said, in 1697, "Dr. Owen has proved that the letting go, by the primitive churches, of the principle that particular churches ought to consist of regenerate persons only, brought in the great anti-Christian apostasy." In the year 1700 he predicted that, if the begun declension (occasioned by the admission of unrenewed men into the church) should continue to progress for thirty years to come as it had done for thirty years past, the more conscientious people would be constrained to gather churches out of churches. A prediction which was extensively verified, in about that time. This suspension of divine influence, and decline of vital religion, continued until the time of Edwards, the Luther of New England; who, by his example, and by his unanswerable treatise on the terms of communion, revived the practice of receiving to the Lord's table none but those who furnished credible evidence of a moral renovation by the Spirit, and of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;—a practice which has been steadily increasing, from his day to this; and, with it, evangelical doctrine, and revivals of religion.

By this course of ample experiment, in the primitive

church, at the Reformation, and in New England, the point is settled, that evangelical doctrines cannot be maintained in the churches of our Lord, but by maintaining the apostolic tenure of membership. Let men of the world be amalgamated with the pious in the church, and soon evangelical opinions will be exiled, or remain only in her creed, a dead letter.

In the application of this discourse, we invite the attention of those whose minds have been unsettled and perplexed in respect to the claims of the liberal and evangelical systems to be regarded as the faith delivered to the saints, or who have been accustomed to regard the latter system as unintelligible, contradictory, absurd, and of no salutary practical influence.

We are sensible that, in our land, there are many who have no opportunity of hearing the evangelical system of doctrines stated in a manner which its advocates would approve; and that no small prejudice has arisen against it through misapprehension. But, with his Bible in his possession, we are constrained to believe that every man may know what the Scriptures say on these subjects: and that, if the evangelical system be divine, it cannot be rejected with impunity. If to any this opinion shall seem severe, and, as some have said, as if we were *glad* that many will be lost, we can say with an apostle, and call God to witness, that "we have great heaviness and continual sorrow in our hearts for our brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh," whom, as we understand the Bible, we cannot but regard as fatally deceived.

If the effects of their mistake were, in our view, confined to this transient scene,—or if we could believe that the truth of God, as a whole, could be misunderstood and rejected, consistently with that moral renovation of the heart which is indispensable to communion with God, and admission to

heaven,—we might hold our peace; for of what possible consequence can it be to us, whether our fellow-men agree with or differ from us on points which, in a few days, may be of no consequence. Time is too short, and eternity is too long, to justify great solicitude about things which affect us only here. But if, as we believe, all the qualifications for heaven have ceased from the heart of man, and all the means of their restoration lie in the system of revealed truth, and the efficacy given to it by the special influence of the Holy Spirit; and if God will not sanctify by the instrumentality of error, where his truth is rejected in the presence or within the reach of ample evidence, how can we, in such circumstances, behold our fellow-men, our friends and neighbors, moving onward to the confirmed state of a miserable eternity, and not be deeply affected? We beseech you, brethren, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," that you be not offended with our plainness in this discourse, nor with our importunity in its application. We respectfully but earnestly invite your attention to the argument which has been submitted to your consideration; and entreat that, in the light of it, and of God's holy Word, you will give to your own opinions one revision more,—one *careful, prayerful, immediate revision;* for, if you are wrong, it will soon be too late to retrieve the mistake. Allow us to ask you, then, affectionately, solemnly, whether such collateral evidence as we have been able to lay into the scale of evangelical exposition can be the result of accident, or can be found to be laid in the opposite scale. Are the doctrines of the liberal system contained in the text, according to its most direct and obvious meaning? Do they receive the sanction of approbation from the most devout persons, and the sentence of condemnation from the irreligious and vicious? Does the liberal system

produce the same objections which the faith delivered to the saints produced? Is it gladly received by the common people, and rejected by the same sort of men, in the higher orders of society, who rejected the Gospel? Do the doctrines of the liberal system occasion a virulent hostility against them, in such circumstances as show that it does not result from the ardent love of truth, or hatred of error? Do they occasion the same fears and anxieties about a future state, the same deep conviction of sin, and the same joyful and often sudden conversion to God, as are manifested under evangelical preaching, and in revivals of religion? Do the doctrines of the liberal system produce revivals of religion at all, — and not, rather, awaken prejudices and array influence against them? Do they produce the same style of piety — as deep, solemn and ardent — as the faith produced which was delivered to the saints? Do they inspire the same solicitude and effort for the awakening and conversion of sinners, under the light of the Gospel,— or the same compassion for the heathen, and enterprise for their salvation? Does the liberal system inspire the same assurance of its being true, attended by the same unwavering constancy in its profession, which the faith delivered to the saints inspired? And does it produce the same assurance of hope, and the same sustaining joy, "full of glory," in the hour of death?

We make the appeal to your consciences and your hearts, whether you do not perceive and know that the liberal system is naked, in respect to these great effects which the faith delivered to the saints did produce; and whether all of them do not, with undeniable notoriety, cluster about the path of the evangelical system. If this be so, can that system be false which produces the effects, so many and so great, which were produced by the faith delivered to the saints; and can

that be the true faith which is so utterly destitute of them? The Gospel is the most powerful moral cause which has ever operated in this world. Its effects, of course, cannot be hid, and cannot be the same with a system in direct opposition to it. The first three or four centuries brought out unequivocally the effects of the faith delivered to the saints which we have noted. These, all of them, are found associated still with the evangelical system; and none of them with the liberal system. Is, then, the liberal system the faith once delivered to the saints? Why does it not produce the same effects which that produced? Has the Gospel changed its nature, or lost its power, or has human nature changed, — or is the liberal system another Gospel? Ponder well this subject; for the Judge is at the door, and the day will burst upon us soon, that will try every man's faith, and heart, and work.

Allow us, then, once more to refer it to your consciences, whether, admitting the evidence from exposition to be on each side the same, this decisive weight of collateral evidence ought not to withdraw your confidence from the liberal system, and to decide your judgment in favor of the evangelical system, as the very "word of God, and faith of Jesus." Every great system of truth and of falsehood is attended by a mass of presumptive collateral evidence, for or against it. And, while the evangelical system commends itself to your confidence by all that variety of collateral evidence which has been exhibited, and the opposite system is wholly unattended by it, dare you, will you, reject the evangelical, and risk your salvation on the liberal, system? Does the thought, as you read, offer to rise, "Possibly, after all, my own system may be a deception, and that which I have disputed be true." Let it rise; for it may be the movement on your mind of the long-resisted Spirit, suggesting to your conscience, "This is the way,—walk ye in

it." Does fear flash across your mind, at times, the thought, as a momentary reality, "I may be wrong, after all; and these doctrines, which produce revivals of religion, and such joy in death, may be the faith delivered to the saints"? Stifle not the unwelcome conviction, for it may be the commencement of eternal life in your soul. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

REPLY

TO A REVIEW OF THE SERMON ENTITLED "THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS."

To the Editor of the Christian Examiner.*

Sir:—I received and read the review of my sermon, delivered at Worcester, in your number of January, 1824: and most of the remarks which I propose to submit to your consideration were written in the early part of that year; but circumstances which I need not explain have prevented their publication until now.

It is not to be expected, or claimed, that an author shall, in all respects, be gratified in the exhibition which is made of his opinions and arguments; and yet, there are, doubtless, rules of controversy which the laws of equity acknowledge and protect. We are bound, for example, if we attempt to answer an extended complex argument, to give the argument entire; for moral evidence is but the accumulation of probabilities; and a partial statement of the argument is in effect a misrepresentation of it, as it supposes the writer to rely on

* The following reply was made to an article which appeared in the Christian Examiner, purporting to be a review of the preceding sermon. It is addressed to the Editor of the Christian Examiner, as it was originally designed for that work; but it was afterwards inserted in the volume of the Christian Spectator for 1825.

the argument which is stated and replied to, when it may be that he relies on it only as taken in connection with the facts which are omitted. In answering a complex argument, each particular which goes to constitute the entire argument should be stated in its logical form, and in the words of the writer, or in language equally intelligible. Otherwise, how can the reader know what the argument is, or whether the reply be relevant or not? A mere allusion to the argument, without a statement of it in logical form, may answer the purpose of evasion, or declamation, or irrelevant reply, but never will answer the purpose of fair and honorable controversy.

It is equally plain that each argument replied to should be met and answered as it is understood and relied on by our antagonist. However near the reply may approach to the point of the argument, if it does not meet it directly, the more ingenious is the sophistry, and the more provoking are the misrepresentations; because, being numerous, and of such nice discrimination, the reader is soon tired of sitting in judgment on such little matters; and the culprit, when this end is achieved, turns and hurls back on his injured antagonist the odium of nice metaphysical distinction, and of vain jangling. One might as well go out "to seek a flea, or to hunt a partridge in the mountains," as to follow up with arguments such dodging antagonists. And whether such conduct indicates a desire to know the truth or to avoid it, it is not difficult to perceive.

Another obvious rule of controversial equity is, that where matters of fact constitute the argument, the facts be noted in their logical bearing, and be replied to in point. Facts, when relevant, constitute the most invincible argument. Theories are nothing in their presence; and no honorable alternative remains, but to show their irrelevancy, or to

admit the conclusion to which they tend. Silence in respect to them, or a mere allusion to them which affords no conception of their place and bearing in the argument, is inconsistent with argumentative uprightness.

Should the violation of these rules be the result of mistake, it would evince only incompetency for controversial writing. But if it should be the result of design, it would indicate insincerity in the search after truth, and a dishonorable and criminal disregard of moral principle. The man who, in natural science, should resort to such measures to conceal or baffle the argument of his antagonist, would be regarded justly as the enemy of science. But how highly is the crime aggravated, when the concealment or evasion attempted respects revealed truth; and, as the case may be, those truths which are necessary to save men from destruction, and qualify them for heaven! Such unworthy conduct in theological writers has created, already, an extensive prejudice against controversy as the means of discovering truth; and the continuance of it by men of the clerical profession would increase that prejudice greatly, and would justly forfeit the confidence which a Christian public ought to be authorized to repose in their spiritual guides. If we consider, also, the unavoidable imperfection of language as the vehicle of thought, and the utter inefficacy of civil coercion in the development and preservation of truth, we shall perceive the necessity of an enlightened public opinion, which shall lay the tax of shame and of crime upon argumentative dishonesty. The rights of conscience are not to be invaded; but neither are they to be exercised with impunity in a wanton and unprincipled manner. The interests of the community in revealed truth are as sacred as the rights of property; and the wilful perversion of an argument ought to be coupled with dishonor

and crime, in the public estimation, as really as chicanery in law, the sequestration of property by theft, or the perversion of justice by a false oath. The object of religious controversy is not the concealment, but the discovery, of the truth; not the display of dexterity in evading an argument, but of magnanimity in embracing its results; not the gratification of our pride, but the edification of our hearts, by receiving the truth in the love of it.

Nothing, I am aware, is more common than mutual accusations of unfairness in religious controversy, and the sorry exhibition of petulance and invective; and the disgust I have felt at such exhibitions has kept me from personal controversy to this day. And if I thought that, in the remarks I am about to make, I should only add to these humiliating specimens of imbecility and acrimony, I would instantly lay down my pen. But the subject of the sermon is one on which I have entered with other motives than the desire of victory, and with other feelings towards Unitarians than those of unkindness. I believe, sincerely, that the doctrines which they reject are the Gospel, and are necessary to their salvation; — that the truth only is able to save them; and that error, however sincerely believed, will not save them. I had occasion to know that those who sit under Unitarian ministrations do extensively and greatly misapprehend the doctrines which are held by the Orthodox; and that they do honestly suppose the Orthodox to believe and teach things which they utterly disclaim and abhor. It was my wish, therefore, to place before these children of the Pilgrims a plain, popular statement of the doctrines of their fathers, as they are now understood and believed by their Orthodox brethren; believing that they, with us, may as yet be within the circumference of that covenant, whose blessings go down to the

thousandth generation of them that fear God and keep his commandments, as our fathers feared and obeyed. I wished also to accompany this explanatory statement of the Orthodox faith with some of those arguments which have long, to my mind, appeared unanswerable. And, sir, I did indulge the hope, that the truth, freed from misapprehension, and contemplated in its native majesty, simplicity and beauty, and attended by its proper evidence, might allay the prejudices of many against it, commend itself to their consciences and their hearts, and become to them the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. But, however this hope might be realized or not, I did expect the gratification of knowing, and felt no small degree of curiosity to know, what could be said to an argument in which I could detect no fallacy, by able and honest men, who should look it in the face and answer it to the point.

And now, sir, allow me to say, that it affords me no pleasure to affirm that my motives in writing, and in desiring an answer, have been defeated, so far as the influence of the review is concerned: and defeated in a manner which involves, in my judgment, a violation of the preceding equitable rules of controversy. No person who reads only the review can possibly possess himself of my entire argument; or understand the logical point and bearing of each particular argument; or what, *generally*, are the matters of fact relied on; or what is the logical bearing of those which are *alluded* to. And what is still more to be regretted is, that the reply to particular arguments, which is attempted, is made to the arguments rather as alluded to than as logically stated,—and evades the point of the argument, by replying to a position which the argument nowhere assumes. I am far from charging the reviewer with design in this logical aberration.

But it did early occur to my mind, and has repeatedly been suggested to me by others, that, if the reviewer had feared the effect of the doctrines and arguments, as stated in the sermon, upon Unitarian congregations, and had set himself to write a review which should prevent them from knowing how the doctrines were stated, and by what arguments they were supported, and at the same time to create such a prejudice against the sermon as would keep the people generally from reading and judging for themselves, he could not have managed more adroitly than he has done.

But, in addition to this disappointment of all my reasonable, and, as I must say, my benevolent hopes, I am charged with duplicity in what I have done. According to the reviewer, I have given an epitome of doctrine, as the faith delivered to the saints, which is decidedly anti-Calvinistic, and have falsely claimed that it is substantially the faith of the Reformers, the Puritans, the fathers of New England, and the great body of the Orthodox in our country.

Thus disappointed and misrepresented, I have to request that you will do me the justice to re-publish a corrected statement of my argument, and a vindication of my good name, in your miscellany,—the only vehicle of information which can render the redress as extensive as the injury. The love and fearless pursuit of the truth, professed by Unitarians, justify the confidence with which I appeal both to your candor and to your magnanimity. Should the length of the article seem to furnish an apology for declining its insertion, you will readily perceive that, if the mistakes in the review had been fewer, my reply had been proportionably shorter; and that equity demands that the explanation be coëxtensive with the occasions for it which are created by misrepresentations, how-

ever undesigned. Had my arguments been suppressed or misrepresented by typographical mistakes, the length of the *errata* would not be deemed a reason for refusing their insertion; and it will not seem to you, I trust, a matter of much consequence, in respect to the claims of justice, whether the causes of the injury sustained are mechanical, or intellectual, or moral.

I shall first attend to the charge preferred against me of substituting the Arminian for the Calvinistic system; and of claiming (ignorantly or wickedly) that it is the faith of the Orthodox now, and the faith of the fathers of New England, of the Puritans, and of the Reformers.

This system, which I have denominated evangelical, the reviewer declares to be an innovation upon the popular (Calvinistic) faith; and that it is neither strictly, nor even substantially, the same with the doctrines held by the Reformers, the Puritans, the fathers of New England, or the great body of the Orthodox in our country. It is, he declares, "decidedly anti-Calvinistic; expressly denying some of the peculiarities of Calvinism; distinctly asserting none of them, nor even implying one of them, in a manner to make it obvious to the mind of a common reader." Upon these charges I remark,

1. That the Calvinistic and anti-Calvinistic systems of doctrine are in direct opposition on those points which constitute the two systems; and that between them there is no middle system. Man is, or he is not, entirely depraved; he needs, or he does not need, a moral renovation to fit him for heaven. This renovation is achieved by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, as a free sovereign gift; or it is, in some way, secured by the merit of good works. Men are justified

by faith, or they are not; and all saints do persevere, or they do not. Calvinists take one side on these points, and Arminians take the other ; and there is no middle ground.

2. The Arminian system of doctrine and the Unitarian are the same on those points in which both differ from the Calvinistic system. Unitarians acted with the Remonstrants when the Arminian system was formed. It is the system adopted generally, and defended in opposition to Calvinism, by English Unitarians; and is the system, substantially, which Dr. Ware supports, in agreement with Dr. John Taylor, and in opposition to Edwards and Dr. Woods. The Arminian and Unitarian systems of doctrine are therefore the same, as opposed to Calvinism.

3. Unitarians claim that the anti-Calvinistic system is the true primitive faith. They hold that their interpretation of the Bible, on the doctrinal points, is according to the mind of the Spirit,— is the truth as understood and professed by the primitive church : — Therefore,

4. The doctrines contained in the evangelical system, as it is denominated in the sermon, are the faith delivered to the saints, the reviewer himself being judge. He does not complain of me for claiming them as such, but only for claiming their agreement with the Calvinistic system,— which he denies. He declares that the Calvinistic system is not, and that the anti-Calvinistic system is, the faith delivered to the saints; and that the system which I have set forth is decidedly anti-Calvinistic, and is, of course, the faith once delivered to the saints. The reviewer, therefore, claims the doctrines laid down in the evangelical system as the true anti-Calvinistic, Unitarian, primitive faith. He claims that I have abandoned the Calvinistic system, and have come over to the

Arminian, Unitarian faith; and the only front of my offending is, that, not having the capacity to perceive, or the magnanimity to avow, my conversion to Arminianism, I have attempted to persuade the public that this anti-Calvinistic Unitarian creed of mine is substantially the faith of the Reformers, the Puritans, the fathers of New England, and the great body of the Orthodox in our country.

When I first read these charges, I was disposed to bestow a smile upon them, and let them pass. But, in attending to the course of the controversy between Unitarians and the Orthodox, I perceived what appeared to me a settled determination in Unitarians to make the impression on the public mind, that every variation in the explanation, statement and proof, of our doctrines, occasioned by the progress of mental philosophy, or of biblical criticism, or by Unitarian misrepresentations, is an abandonment of our first principles, and an approximation to Unitarianism. I have heard the boastings reiterated of Professor Stuart's approximation to Unitarianism, and of my own Arminian tendencies in preaching: and lately I have read in Dr. Channing's sermon, that "It is a plain matter of fact, that the hard features of that religious system which has been 'received by tradition from our fathers' are greatly softened; and that a necessity is felt by those who hold it of accommodating their representations of it more and more to the improved philosophy of the human mind, and to the undeniable principles of natural and revealed religion. Unconditional election is seldom heard of among us. The imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity is hastening to join the exploded doctrine of transubstantiation. The more revolting representations of man's state by nature are judiciously kept out of sight; and, what is of still greater import-

ance, preaching is incomparably more practical than formerly." *

I have concluded, therefore, that the time has come which demands an examination of these claims. If Calvinists are becoming Unitarians in doctrine, without the capacity to know it, or the magnanimity to own it, let it be known, and

* If the meaning of Dr. Channing be, that some of the doctrines which, as mere abstract propositions, wear a repelling aspect, are, as now explained, seen to be the regular parts of a great system of moral government, in the administration of which justice and mercy are reconciled, and that mental philosophy has lent her aid in this exposition ; — that the doctrine of election is now so stated as admits of accountability and punishment, and stops the mouths of gainsayers ; — that the imputation of Adam's sin and of Christ's righteousness are so stated as to appear both practicable and rational ; and that the doctrine of total depravity is explained in a manner which shows both the falsehood and the absurdity of the statements and objections made concerning it, by its opponents; — or that, as the doctrines of the Bible are better understood, they produce an increase of practical preaching,— it might all be admitted as a concise account of what we believe to be true. But if Dr. C. intends to insinuate, or to say, that any one doctrine of the Reformation has been given up, or the principle abandoned on which it has always rested, we request him to review this position, and to fortify it by evidence, or abandon it. Not *one* of the first principles of the doctrinal system of the Reformers has been abandoned, while every one of them has been corroborated by a more accurate knowledge of mental philosophy, and of scriptural interpretation. The entire system never stood so impregnable as now; and never appeared so intelligible, so reasonable, so amiable, and, at the same time, so terrible to guilty consciences, as now. And if Dr. C. supposes that the doctrine of man's depravity, or the doctrine of election, is not preached as often as it was, and that Calvinists are holding their peace on these points, he follows his own imagination instead of historical verity.

All the great doctrines of the Reformation are preached *more frequently*, and more plainly and powerfully, by the Orthodox in New England, than they were fifty or even thirty years ago ; and their faithful exhibition is attended by the power of God in those increasing revivals of religion which are carrying salvation through our land.

let them have their reward. And if Unitarian writers are setting up their claim falsely, from ignorance, or from an apprehension that the Calvinistic system, presented to their people as Calvinists believe and teach it, would convict them of misrepresentation, and bring upon them the just indignation of an injured community whose confidence they have abused, — then let this be known, and let Unitarians have their reward.

I come, then, to the question, Are the doctrines contained in the discourse, entitled "The Faith once delivered to the Saints," the same, substantially, with the doctrines held by the Reformers, the Puritans, the fathers of New England, and which are now held by the great body of the Orthodox in our country; — or are they "decidedly anti-Calvinistic," exhibiting, substantially, the system which has been embraced by Arminians and Unitarians?

I claim that the epitome in the sermon embodies substantially, and represents fairly, all the elementary and fundamental principles of that system which has been denominated Calvinistic: and the reviewer claims that it is an "innovation upon the popular Calvinistic faith; that it errs and strays entirely from the Calvinistic system; and is decidedly anti-Calvinistic."

1. My first remark is, that if the system of doctrines which I have set forth is decidedly anti-Calvinistic, or Unitarian, then the world hitherto has been very much disquieted in vain on the subject of doctrinal disagreement; for if this creed of mine be Arminian or Unitarian, it is no less true, as I shall be able to show, that it is substantially Calvinistic: so that the controversialists on both sides have walked hitherto in a vain show, and have so fought as men that beat the air.

2. If the epitome is decidedly anti-Calvinistic and Uni-

tarian, then, sir, the age of doctrinal controversy is ended, and the millennial agreement of the watchmen, seeing eye to eye, is begun. For I have evidence, which I will produce in its place, that the doctrines contained in the discourse are substantially Calvinistic, and are so regarded by the Orthodox in this country, and by the reviewer himself. If, then, it is, at the same time, sufficiently happy in its terms to express the views of truth embraced by Arminians and Unitarians, then doctrinal controversy is ended, and the age of concord is begun.

At this auspicious moment, let us look at the articles of pacification, — at this Unitarian creed; the most explicit, if not the first, which has ever been published in this country.

Article 1. Unitarians believe, "That men are free agents, in the possession of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as to render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires; reasonable that he should require it, and fit that he should inflict, literally, the entire penalty of disobedience: — such ability is here intended as lays a perfect foundation for government by law, and for rewards and punishments according to deeds."

Art. 2. Unitarians believe, "That the law of God requires love to God with all the heart, and impartial love for men; together with certain overt duties to God and men, by which this love is to be expressed; and that this law is supported by the sanctions of eternal life and eternal death."

Art. 3. Unitarians believe, "That the ancestors of our race violated this law; that, in some way, as a consequence of their apostasy, all men, as soon as they become capable of accountable action, do, *of their own accord, most freely*, and *most wickedly*, withhold from God the *supreme love*, and from man the *impartial love*, which the law requires, beside violating many of its practical precepts; and that the obedience of the heart which the law requires has ceased entirely from the whole race of man."

Art. 4. Unitarians believe, "That, according to the principles of moral government, obedience, either antecedent to transgression or subsequent, cannot avert the penalty of law; and that pardon, upon condition of repentance merely, would destroy the efficacy of moral government."

Art. 5. Unitarians believe, "That an atonement has been made for sin by Jesus Christ, with reference to which, God can maintain the influence of his law and forgive sin, upon condition of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: — that all men are invited sincerely in this way to return to God, with an assurance of pardon and eternal life if they comply."

Art. 6. Unitarians believe, "That a compliance with these conditions is practicable, in the regular exercise of the powers and faculties given to man as an accountable creature; and is prevented only by the exercise of a voluntary, criminal aversion to God, so inflexibly obstinate, that, by motives merely, men are never persuaded to repent and believe."

Art. 7. Unitarians believe, "That God is able, by his Spirit, to make to the mind of man such an exhibition of the truth as shall unfailingly convince him of sin, render him willing to obey the Gospel, and actually and joyfully obedient."

Art. 8. Unitarians believe, "That this special influence of the Holy Spirit is given according to the supreme discretion or good pleasure of God; and yet, ordinarily, is so inseparably associated with the use of means by the sinner, as to create ample encouragement to attend upon them, and to render all hopes of conversion while neglecting or rejecting the truth, or while living in open sin, eminently presumptuous."

Art. 9. Unitarians believe, "That believers are justified by the merits of Christ through faith; and are received into a covenant with God which secures their continuance in holiness forever: — while those who die in their sins will continue to sin wilfully, and to be punished justly forever."

Art. 10. Unitarians believe, finally, "That God exercises a providential government; which extends to all events in such a manner as to lay a just foundation for resignation to him in afflictions brought upon us by the wickedness of men, and for gratitude in the reception of good in all the various modes of human instrumentality; — that all events shall illustrate his glory, and be made subservient to the good of his kingdom; — and that this government is administered in accordance with a purpose or plan, known and approved of by him from the beginning."

This, then, is the creed which the reviewer pronounces anti-Calvinistic, and as embodying, of course, and setting forth, the faith of Unitarians. If I could only be assured that the reviewer understood the epitome when he wrote, and under-

stood the doctrinal opinions of Unitarians, and that he does, *ex animo*, believe what is stated in the creed contained in the sermon, I should give myself up to unmingled joy. But I have known persons, and ministers too, and even Orthodox ministers, who, having treasured up sounds instead of ideas, could never recognize a doctrine as the same, if it was stated in any language but that to which their ears had been accustomed. It has been claimed, also, if I mistake not, by Unitarians, that there are five or six hundred Unitarian ministers in the church of Old England who have declared that they do, without equivocation or mental reservation, believe in articles, which they do, *ex animo*, disbelieve and despise.

The reviewer also has told us that Unitarian views of the Christian graces may be different from ours; and I see not why our views of Christian morality may not differ from theirs as much; — theirs authorizing them to say and do things upon principles of expediency which the Orthodox might regard as inconsistent with simplicity and godly sincerity.

It has even been thought and said by some, that Unitarians have felt themselves at liberty to display more dexterity than honesty in disposing of a troublesome argument; never taking it by the horns, when it might, peradventure, be seen to push them; and sometimes doing just nothing at all with it, upon the principle that some arguments are more easily forgotten than answered; and sometimes even claiming the argument to which resistance might have been hazardous. This last is the master stroke of policy. For what but discomfiture can an antagonist expect, when, if he reasons inconclusively, he is sure to be detected; and if he reasons conclusively, he is sure to be claimed as in unison with the enemy? We are delivered, however, in the present case,

from the apprehension of insincerity, or of artifice, on the part of the reviewer; since he brings against me publicly a charge implicating my intellect or my honesty, in pretending that the creed which I have given is substantially Calvinistic,—a thing which neither his honor as a man, nor his conscience as a Christian, would allow him to do, if he did not *ex animo* believe that my creed is, as he declares it to be, decidedly anti-Calvinistic, and, of course, decidedly Arminian and Unitarian. Have, then, the Unitarians come over to the Calvinists; or have the Calvinists gone over to them? This is the question.

It is certainly an unexpected task which devolves upon me, of proving that my doctrinal opinions are Calvinistic. It is not my purpose to exhaust the subject now; but if, after reading the evidence which I submit to his consideration, the reviewer shall remain sceptical, and call for more, it shall be at his service.

As evidence, then, that the doctrinal system contained in the epitome is substantially Calvinistic, I submit the following:

1. It is the doctrinal system which I have exhibited in my public ministry for more than twenty years, and which has secured to me, without contradiction, until now, the reputation of being a Calvinist. Could this have happened, if my system of belief were decidedly anti-Calvinistic? Have Calvinists and Arminians misunderstood my doctrinal opinions, until now?

2. Since the publication of the sermon, I have been neither admonished of heresy nor denounced for it by any of my Calvinistic brethren; and, commonly, the Orthodox are not slow to denounce apostates, especially in Connecticut, Unitarians themselves being judges.

3. I have received from Unitarians none of those tokens of complacency which they are wont to bestow upon apostates from Orthodoxy. Not one of the thousand trumpets which blow the fame of favored Unitarians has swelled a note in my praise; and no Unitarian press has groaned with a second and third edition of this anti-Calvinistic sermon, for gratuitous distribution.

4. Even the reviewer is not softened by his own convictions of my anti-Calvinism into complacency and good feeling, but goes on, throughout the review, smiting, as if he were contending with a real antagonist. Could this have happened if he had only found a convert from Calvinism, whose sole fault was that he had not as yet found out that he had come over to the Unitarian faith? Indeed, I have attempted in vain to discover how an anti-Calvinistic creed, claiming to be the faith delivered to the saints, should be regarded as furnishing an occasion for proving that Calvinism is not the primitive faith. Had I anywhere asserted that Calvinism is the primitive faith? I had not named the term. Was the evangelical system, however, so decidedly Calvinistic in its bearings, that it must fall, of course, to the ground, if it could be proved that Calvinism is not the faith delivered to the saints? By no means. The doctrines laid down in the sermon are an "innovation upon the popular faith" of Calvinists. They are "decidedly anti-Calvinistic." They are the doctrinal articles of Arminians and Unitarians; and yet, in reviewing this decidedly anti-Calvinistic Unitarian creed, a great effort is made to prove that Calvinism is not the faith delivered to the saints. Would not the reviewer have put forth his strength to as much purpose, if he had labored to prove that Mahometanism was not the faith delivered to the saints?

5. I have made inquiry, far and wide, for the purpose of ascertaining whether I had, in the opinion of the Orthodox of any class, as I have in the opinion of the reviewer, "erred and strayed entirely" from the Calvinistic system. But, while some differ with me on subordinate points, or modes of explanation, all, without exception, from whom I have heard, have admitted that the sermon contains, *substantially*, a true account of the faith delivered to the saints; and a *true account* of what have been denominated the doctrines of the Reformation, and of the Orthodox faith as held in this country.

Dr. Green, of Philadelphia, the editor of the Christian Advocate, says, in a review of my sermon, that I belong to a class of ministers who are Calvinists; that the "evangelical system" will no doubt be considered as a Calvinistic statement; that I claim, and justly, all Calvinists of whatever description as belonging to those who hold the evangelical system, though all of them would not, of course, subscribe to every statement it contains: — but no man understands more fully than Dr. Green does the doctrinal articles of the Presbyterian confession of faith, and the prevailing views of the Presbyterian church. The class of Calvinists to which Dr. Green supposes I belong are, probably, the Calvinists of Connecticut, and of New England generally. But are not the Orthodox clergy of Connecticut and New England Calvinists? Are not the professors at Andover Calvinistic? And yet no complaint from that source has been made against the sermon as anti-Calvinistic; on the contrary, it has been recognized by the professors as being what it claims to be, substantially Calvinistic.

But I have in reserve an authority to which the reviewer will, I have no doubt, do ample justice. It is his own opinion, and is as follows:

"We doubt not that Dr. B. is fully persuaded, in his own mind, that the true import of Scripture favors *his* system; but not more so than we are, that it favors *ours*."

Ah! Dr. B's system and OUR SYSTEM; and Dr. B. supporting *his* system by one interpretation of the Bible, and the reviewer his system by another and a different interpretation! Dr. B.'s system is not the same, then, with that adopted by the reviewer, and his Unitarian brethren. They and Dr. B., according to the reviewer, *differ*, and differ, too, on points where no difference is possible but that of opposition. The Unitarian system is confessedly anti-Calvinistic; and Dr. B. differs from this system, and, of course, is Calvinistic: and yet, a little while ago, Dr. B.'s system was "decidedly anti-Calvinistic," an "innovation upon the popular faith," "erring and straying entirely" from the Calvinistic system. It is hoped that the reviewer will be able to reconcile these seeming contrarieties of his own declarations; or, if he should be unable to do this, that he will tell us which of the two declarations,—that the evangelical system is Calvinistic, or that it is anti-Calvinistic,—contains his real opinion: and that the public, in the mean time, will suspend their judgment, until the reviewer shall have had an opportunity to shed light upon the subject.

I shall now proceed to submit to your consideration some further evidence, a little more direct, that the doctrines laid down in the sermon are substantially Calvinistic, and no innovation upon the popular faith.

And here it would seem desirable to have a definition of Calvinism. But I find none in the review, and I have not been able to find one in any Unitarian writer; and I cannot but think it a hardship that one of the parties in a dispute should be required to make the definitions on both sides;—

giving to the enemy a tangible object of assault from his movable and undefined battery. Critics, however, inform us that the import of undefined terms may be ascertained by their incidental use; and, blessed with no other light, I have endeavored to ascertain what the reviewer understands by Calvinism. I perceive, then, that the topics from which he infers my anti-Calvinism are the doctrines of free agency, of original sin, total depravity, the atonement, and the use of means. Now, as what I have advanced on these subjects is declared to be anti-Calvinism, Calvinism must be just the opposite of what I have laid down. But what have I taught? That man is a free agent, in the possession of such powers as lay a foundation for moral government; — that sin is not a physical property of the soul, but voluntary and accountable; — that pardon cannot be granted upon repentance merely, and that an atonement has been made for sin, to reconcile pardon with law; — that God renews the heart by the instrumentality of truth, and that there is great encouragement for sinners to use the means of grace, and great presumption in the neglect of them. What the reviewer quotes from the sermon on these subjects is enough, he says, to show that, according to Dr. Beecher, the faith delivered to the saints is decidedly anti-Calvinistic.

The anti-Calvinism of the primitive church is proved by quotations from the Fathers, which show that, in their opinion, things do not come to pass according to a necessity of fate; that mankind are free agents and accountable for their deeds, and are liable to rewards and punishments according to the worth of the actions of every one; that not a single one is formed wicked by the Creator of all things; that the atonement is made for all men, and not for a part merely; and that those to whom the Gospel is preached perish through

their own fault, and not from the limitation of the atonement, or by any physical inability, or fatal necessity.

These positions, then, from my discourse and from the Fathers, being, in the opinion of the reviewer, enough to prove that both my opinions and theirs are decidedly anti-Calvinistic, Calvinism, as being the opposite of these, must be supposed to teach that things happen according to fate; that mankind are not free agents, in the possession of any such ability as lays a perfect foundation for government by law; and that there are no moral qualities in actions, and that mankind are not to be rewarded or punished according to their deeds; that God creates in man a sinful nature; that pardon, upon condition of repentance merely, *is* consistent with moral government, and that no atonement is necessary, or has been made; that God renews the hearts of men without the instrumentality of truth, and that sinners have no encouragement to use the means of grace; that men do not fail of salvation by their own fault, but by the limitation of the atonement, or a physical inability to obey the Gospel. But are these the doctrinal opinions of Calvinists? Do they believe and teach the doctrine of fate, and deny the doctrine of man's free agency, and of rewards and punishments in a future state according to the deeds done in the body? Do they hold that God creates in man a sinful nature; that pardon is consistent with law upon condition of repentance merely; that God renews the heart without the instrumentality of the truth; that there is no encouragement for sinners to use the means of grace; and that men fail of salvation by a fatal necessity, and not by their own fault? These points are Calvinism, or the reviewer's arguments to prove me and the Fathers anti-Calvinistic are nothing to the purpose. But does he believe that Calvinists hold to such doctrines? I hope the reviewer will not regard me as treat-

ing him with indecorum, if I say that "he knows" that the doctrines last named are not Calvinism, "or his ignorance upon the subject is such as to make it a sin for him to write upon it in so confident a manner."

We know that Calvinism is often represented as teaching that infants deserve damnation, and that hell is paved with their bones; that all men are, by nature and necessarily, as depraved and wicked as they can be; that an atonement has been made only for the sins of the elect,—a very small part of mankind; that the elect will be saved, though they should conduct ever so wickedly; and that the non-elect cannot be saved, though they should conduct ever so religiously; and that men to whom pardon is offered, without special grace to enable them to repent, are in the condition of captives in a dungeon,—insulted with the offer of liberty, and threatened with punishment if they do not embrace it, when their hands are bound, and their feet put in fetters. Who circulate these fabrications, is no secret. A minister in Boston inquired lately of a person what he thought of that horrible doctrine of Calvinism, that hell was paved with the bones of infants; and a youth educated under Unitarian auspices, who heard and approved an Orthodox account of original sin and man's depravity, expressed his disappointment, and said that he had supposed that the preacher agreed with the professors at Andover, that infants were sent to hell. It is needless to say that the views of Calvinism implied in the statements just alluded to are false. How long the good people of Massachusetts will be doomed to be terrified by their spiritual guides with these stories about Calvinism, as children are terrified by superstitious nurses with stories of ghosts and hobgoblins, I cannot tell.

It will not avail the reviewer to say that one or another of these odious positions has been adopted by persons who were

Calvinists. Calvinism is not found in the *eccentricities* of men who bear that name; for then there would be as many Calvinisms as there are specific differences of opinion among Calvinists. Calvinism is that system of doctrine which, in its great elementary principles, is opposed to what is called the Arminian system. The two systems, as all systems built on revelation must do, include some truths in common; but there are certain points on which they not only differ, but hold opposite doctrines. It is those doctrines in which Calvinists and Arminians differ which constitute the two opposing systems; and it is those doctrines in their elementary positions, as held by all Calvinists, which constitute Calvinism, and not those circumstantial varieties in which *they* differ. Is Dr. Priestley's doctrine Unitarianism; and may we charge the Unitarians of Boston publicly with holding all his peculiarities? Are the doctrines of Mr. Belsham Unitarianism; and may we innocently tell our people, in our publications and from the pulpit, that the Unitarians of Massachusetts hold to all the doctrines which are found in the writings of Belsham? Why, then, is the impression made upon honest and fair-minded Unitarian people, that Calvinism is, in many abominable particulars, what Unitarians of information know that it is not, as held and taught by the great body of Calvinists throughout New England, and throughout our country? Are the teachers of Unitarian doctrine afraid to have Calvinism, as it is believed and taught in the Orthodox congregations, come before their people attended by its appropriate evidence? Do they fear that their people would say to their ministers, If this is Calvinism, you have misrepresented Calvinists, and abused us? Do they fear that the arguments which support Calvinism, divested of misrepresentation, would be too mighty to be encountered? Do they place their hopes of maintaining

their ascendency, where it exists, in keeping their people ignorant of Calvinism as it is believed by the Orthodox? Do they rely more on misrepresentation, and the popular odium which they excite against our doctrine, than on fair statements and sound arguments?

It will not avail the reviewer to say that his views of Calvinism are fairly implied in the principles of the system. For Calvinism is what Calvinists *believe*, and not what they disbelieve. It is what they mean by what they say, and not what they expressly reject and disavow. To represent opinions, therefore, as being Calvinism, which Calvinists as a body disavow, is a gross misrepresentation.

But let us attend a little more minutely to the reviewer's evidence of the anti-Calvinism of my creed. The first is found in my asserting the ability and free agency of man, such as qualifies him for government by law, and renders him a fit subject of reward or punishment. Did any Calvinist ever deny such ability and free agency in man as lays a proper foundation for moral government? Was there ever a Calvinist that did not hold to the entire depravity of man, to the justice of God in his condemnation, and to his boundless grace in providing a Saviour, and renovating the heart by his Holy Spirit; and do Calvinists hold to all this, and yet dare deny such ability and free agency to man as lays a proper foundation for government by law, and for rewards and punishments?

The doctrine of man's free agency is, that man is a free agent,—a proper subject of moral government, and of reward and punishment according to his deeds,—in such a sense as creates obligation to obey the Gospel, and renders the condemnation and punishment of unbelief just. But the philosophy of mind, the metaphysical account of the grounds of

free agency, is not *Calvinism;* for on this subject Calvinists differ;—some placing his free agency in his *created powers*, which the fall has not obliterated; others, in the adventitious aids of the Holy Spirit; and some, perhaps, giving no philosophical account at all of the matter. But none of these theories, in respect to the ground of man's free agency, is Calvinism; and those, of course, are not anti-Calvinists,—that is, they do not *oppose* the fundamental principles of Calvinism on the subject of free agency,—who believe that man is *endued by his Creator with such powers as qualify him to render that obedience to the Gospel which he voluntarily and wickedly withholds.* Are not the great body of the clergy in New England Calvinists? Have they not been so reputed and so called by Unitarians? and does not the reviewer know, that while they hold, with the Reformers and Puritans, that man is a free agent, they hold, also, that his free agency is constituted by the possession of powers and faculties which furnish ability, and create obligation, to obey the Gospel? The article on the subject of free agency is not *anti-Calvinistic:* it is the view of the subject which has prevailed extensively in New England, and among those who have been considered the most high-toned Calvinists, long before the reviewer or the writer of the sermon was born.

"On the subject of *original sin* and *native depravity*, our author," the reviewer says, "is hardly less unsound in his Orthodoxy. He does, indeed, say that the '*supreme* love' to God and the '*impartial* love' to man which the law requires have ceased entirely from *the earth*,"—from the whole race of man. "By this, however, he cannot mean that all *real* 'obedience of the heart,' 'of every kind and degree, has ceased entirely from the whole race of man;' because he must believe that *some degree*, at least, of this

obedience is still to be found in real Christians. All, therefore, that he can intend, and all that his language necessarily signifies, is, that, in our fallen state, our love to God has ceased to be absolutely *supreme*, and our love to man strictly *impartial;* that is, that our obedience is *imperfect;* not, we should think, a very bold position, nor one likely to be contested by any man in his right mind."

I have always understood the Bible to say, that where there is not supreme love to God in the heart, there is none at all; and, that the love to man which is not in its nature benevolent and impartial is sinister and selfish. If I am correct, then, in my understanding of the Bible, the declaration that the supreme love to God, and the impartial love to man, which the law requires, have ceased entirely from the whole race of man, would seem to imply something more than that "our obedience is imperfect;" especially if the clause be added which the reviewer has omitted, "that the obedience of the heart which the law requires has ceased entirely from the whole race of man." But I "cannot mean that all real obedience of the heart, of every kind and degree, has ceased from the whole race of man." Be it so; but have I not said it? — for the question is not whether I *believe* what I have said, but what I have said. Does not my language, then, teach that all obedience which the law of God requires has ceased *entirely* from the whole race of man; and why may I not be supposed to mean as I have said? Because I must believe that "real Christians" have in their hearts some degree of obedience to the law of God; — that is, I cannot believe that all men refuse to obey the law as soon as they begin to act accountably, because I believe that some men are afterwards made willing to obey it, in some degree, by the special influence of the Holy Spirit. The reviewer might as well insist

that I cannot believe that all men are born infants, because they become men afterwards; or that infants are born without innate ideas, because I must admit that they have ideas some time after they are born.

The statement which I have given of the doctrine of the *atonement* might, the reviewer says, "be adopted by all Unitarians of whom we have any knowledge." But does not the reviewer know that the turning point of the controversy between Calvinists and Unitarians is the *necessity* of an atonement, arising from the nature of moral government, which renders it impossible, as free agents are constituted, to forgive sin upon condition of repentance merely, and yet maintain the influence of law? Does he not perceive that this point is prominently stated in the sermon; and does he not know that this principle is unequivocally, and almost universally, denied by Unitarians at the present day? Is he not acquainted with the recent productions of Dr. Ware? But Dr. Ware says expressly that "the sufferings of Christ were the means of delivering us from punishment, *only* as they are instrumental in delivering us from the dominion of sin; only as they are the means of bringing us to repentance; only as they operate in bringing us to that state of holiness which has the promise of forgiveness, and qualifies for it." * Is he not acquainted with the opinions of Dr. Bancroft? But Dr. Bancroft says that the doctrine of the atonement represents God as an inexorable being, and introduces a principle in his administration which would disgrace any government on earth.† Is he unacquainted with the posthumous sermons of the Rev. Mr. Buckminster? But he says, "There is nothing in Scripture which represents that Christ has made

* Letter to Trin., p. 93. † Ser., p. 224.

it just for God to forgive sins now, upon condition of repentance, when it would not have been before."* Has he no acquaintance with the Christian Disciple, and its patrons? But in that work we are taught that God's justice presents no obstacles in the way of his freely pardoning all such as repent and reform, without his requiring any satisfaction for the sins they may have previously committed.† Is he unacquainted with the Unitarian Miscellany and its editor? But it is asserted in that work that God may pardon the sins of his creatures upon any terms which he may think proper, without exacting satisfaction to his justice. All these passages deny the existence of any such legal difficulty in the way of pardon as is expressed in my statement of the doctrine of the atonement; and claim that Jesus Christ has done nothing to render pardon, upon condition of repentance, consistent with efficacious legislation; and assert that the entire influence of all which he has done is confined to instruction, and example, and motive, as these may operate naturally upon the mind of man. Now, if the reviewer was unacquainted with the sentiments of the above-named writers on the subject of the atonement, why did he hazard the assertion that they might very well adopt what I have said on this subject? But if he was acquainted with the above-quoted opinions, how can he justify himself in saying that men might very well adopt sentiments which he knew them most expressly to disavow? It is no uncommon thing to meet with Unitarian writers who are unacquainted with Calvinism; but never before has it been my lot to meet with a Unitarian writer who was alike ignorant on both sides of the question, and who misrepresented both Unitarians and Calvinists.

There is one subject more to which my attention is called

* Ser., p. 249. † Ch. Dis., 1823, p. 191.

by the reviewer, with a note of earnestness which must not be disregarded. It is my representing the liberal system as *opposite* to the evangelical. "Let him refer," he says, "to the passages in which Professor Ware or Dr. Channing has asserted or implied that men are NOT free agents, or that an atonement has NOT been made for sin by Jesus Christ;" * or that a compliance with the conditions of the Gospel is NOT "practicable in the regular exercise of the powers and faculties given to man as an accountable creature;" or that God does NOT exercise "a providential government which extends to all events." "Let him do this, or retract his charge as publicly as it has been made, or consent to lie under the imputation of a shameless calumny."

I am happy to be called to an account by the reviewer, if I have misrepresented Unitarians; and also to agree with him, that if I have done it, and do not retract the misrepresentation as publicly as I have made it, I do lie justly under the imputation of a shameless calumny. But, in speaking of the doctrines of the evangelical and liberal systems as opposite, I had reference to those which constitute and characterize the two systems as opposite, and not to those truths which must, of course, be held in common in all creeds founded upon revelation. Have not the Calvinistic and Arminian systems always been called opposite systems? and yet, did any man ever intend by this that they held no truths in common? And when I say, "The question is not how much of this system may be misunderstood consistently with sanctification by that which is still embraced; but, can it be rejected entirely by those who possess the Bible, and those who do it be sanctified without it?" my object is to waive the question concerning those who embrace, some more and some less, of the

* See the extracts just before quoted.

evangelical system, and to press the inquiry, whether all the articles which constitute the evangelical and the liberal systems opposite systems can be rejected, and those who do this be saved by the truths which they hold in common with Calvinists.

And now, sir, I cannot perceive any horns for me to hang upon in the dilemma which the reviewer has presented. There is no misrepresentation. The Calvinistic and Unitarian systems are opposite systems, though they agree in some points. Of course, there is no occasion for a public retraction, and no ground for the imputation of "shameless calumny."

NO. II.

To the Editor of the Christian Examiner.

Sir: — In a preceding letter, I have remarked on several things in the review of my sermon which I consider as a departure from the equitable rules of argumentation. It has appeared to me that no correct general view is given of the entire argument, and that, generally, no logical statement is given of the particular arguments and facts relied on; and that the arguments alluded to are evaded and misrepresented, by a reply that assumes a position which the argument does not include; and that the review is calculated to have the effect of appearing to answer an argument which it does not touch, and at the same time of creating such a prejudice against the sermon as will prevent its being read. Whether these complaints are well founded, or only the result of my own unreasonable partiality, it will be my object in this letter to enable you and the public to judge.

The arguments omitted entirely are the *second* and the *fifth:* they are short, and obvious to popular apprehension, and profess to rest on the testimony of the Bible; and, if fallacious, might have been easily answered. The first, stated concisely, stands thus: According to the Bible, the righteous love the truth, and the wicked hate it: according to the Bible, the irreligious, and profane, and immoral, and ambitious, and voluptuous, are *the wicked;* and it is notorious that this class of persons do, as a general fact, prefer the liberal system, and are vehement in their opposition to the evangelical system. We hope the reviewer will take notice of this argument, the next time.

The other argument omitted respects the identity of the faith of the primitive martyrs, and of those who suffered under the papacy. The first are declared to have been slain for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus. But, with reference to those who suffered afterwards under papal persecutions, it is said, also, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." The faith of the martyrs, then, under pagan and papal Rome, was the same. But the faith of the martyrs under the papacy was evangelical; it embodied the doctrines of the Reformation. Of course, these are the same with the faith of the primitive martyrs; and their faith is the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus. It is my request that this argument, also, may receive the attention which it may seem to require.

Under the general argument concerning the identity of the effects produced by the Gospel, and by the evangelical system, one particular argument, of no small consequence, is also passed over in silence. It is the fact that both the Gospel and the evangelical system are virulently opposed by

such persons, and in such circumstances, as show that the opposition does not proceed from the love of truth and aversion to error. For the facts I must refer to the paragraph in the sermon, p. 252. The reviewer is requested to take this argument, also, into serious consideration.

The evasions and misrepresentations of my argument are as follows:

Evasion 1. This has respect to my argument derived from the direct and obvious import of the Bible. In logical form it stands thus: The Bible was given for the use of the common people, the great body of the human family. To be understood by the common people, the true import must be that which corresponds with the direct and obvious import of the terms, as they are understood in popular use. But the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the most direct and obvious meaning of the sacred text; therefore, they are the doctrines of the Bible, the real faith which was delivered to the saints.

This argument the reviewer evades and misrepresents, by answering it as if my position had been that the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the *literal* import of the sacred text,—substituting *literal* for *obvious*, as if they were synonymous terms. But I have not said that the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the *literal* import of the sacred text; and I cannot but believe that the reviewer knows that *obvious import* and *literal import* are not synonymous terms. Why, then, does he wander away from the argument into a dissertation upon figurative language, to disprove what I have not asserted? Will the reviewer undertake to show that the import of figurative language is not, as a general fact, obvious to popular apprehension? Why, then, is it used by inspired writers;

and why used at all by any writers whose object it is to be understood? Is it the object of a revelation to conceal the truth, or to make it manifest? Is there no meaning in the poetry of the Bible obvious to popular apprehension? Are Homer, Virgil, and Milton, unintelligible, because, under the influence of a powerful imagination, they speak in figures? Do not the eastern nations understand their highly figurative writers? or the aboriginals of our land, their eloquent orators? Figurative language, instead of being unintelligible, is peculiarly the language of the common people, and of the early stages of society. Figures are the hieroglyphics of nature, known and read of all men; and if they are sometimes obscure, this is no more than is true of literal language; and if they are sometimes borrowed from scenery or customs not familiar to our eyes, these allusions have been so often explained by commentators, which the common people read, and from the pulpit, also, that the greater part understand their import well. Multitudes who are not learned in the original languages have read history and geography, and have studied English grammar and rhetoric: and there are few who do not understand that there were fig-trees and vines, and hills and valleys, and shepherds and flocks, in Palestine; and that springs of water were scarce in the deserts of Arabia; and that green pastures, and still waters, and the shadow of a great rock, were peculiarly refreshing in a weary land; or, who have not been told, and do not believe, that Egypt was watered by the Nile, instead of showers of rain. Nor is it true, so far as my observation extends, that the common people are misled, as to the doctrines or duties of the Bible, by the obscurity of figurative language. They do not suppose that the sun is God, because it is said the Lord God is a sun; or, that God is material, and clothed with human

passions, because he is spoken of as having a hand and a mouth, and as the subject of anger, and grief, and repentance. If in some instances they do not understand local allusions, and cannot give a learned dissertation upon metaphors, and hyperboles, and oriental customs, they do, nevertheless, in most instances, understand truly the general import of the figurative language of the Bible. Common sense and common honesty, united with diligence and prayer, seldom lead the common people astray in respect to doctrine. So plain is the Bible, that, but for the aid of learned writers, they would seldom go astray. The very rules of exposition are only the operations of common sense in the composition of language, observed and noted by learned men. There were poets before the rules of poetical composition were embodied; and orators, before the rules of elocution were reduced to system; and expositors of the Bible, before exposition became a science, guided by general laws.

Again: His reply, p. 55, represents my position as being, that the obvious sense of the proof-texts is evangelical, taken separate from their connection; and goes on to throw back upon me a powerful declamation about Quakers, and Baptists, and Antinomians, and Catholics, and Universalists, as all claiming and having the obvious sense of proof-texts in their favor, "if you take them separate from their connection." But this is a direct misrepresentation, both of my language and meaning. I have not said nor implied that the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the direct and obvious import of the sacred text, "taken separate from its connection." It is easy to reply to the argument of an opponent, if we may first alter his propositions, and reply to propositions modified to suit our own convenience.

Again: The reviewer says, "When we speak of the obvious

sense as being probably the true sense of any passage, we mean the obvious sense as it struck the mind of the writer, and not as it may happen to strike our minds." I had always supposed that the obvious meaning of a writer is that which is actually communicated to the mind of the reader by his language, interpreted according to its import in common use; while the real meaning of a writer is that which was present to his mind, and in his intention, when he wrote. But how the real can be called the obvious meaning of a writer, when it is not communicated by the terms he employs as the signs of his ideas, it is not easy to understand. And if erring men, as doubtless some have done, may write one thing and mean another, it is not so easy to reconcile it with the wisdom or the goodness of God, that men inspired to give a revelation of Christian duties and doctrines should have one meaning present to their minds, and communicate to their readers an entirely different meaning. If the real and the obvious import of the Bible be not the same, the common people, as I should think, have no Bible; and infidels have the best of the argument, who claim that no revelation has been made.

But perhaps the reviewer will claim that he ought to be understood to mean that the real and the obvious meanings of the inspired writers were the same to their contemporaries; but that what is to us now the obvious import of their language is not the real import of the apostles, nor that which was understood by those of their day. For he says, "Such have been the changes that have taken place in the customs and manners of the world, in the modes of thinking and speaking that have prevailed, in the controversies that have been carried on in the church, and especially in the peculiar, and, as it were, *technical* meaning of some of the leading terms used in those controversies, that even in those passages

where the sacred writers intended to be understood in the obvious import of the language used, what was the obvious import *to them* may appear a forced and most unnatural construction *to us*, from the necessary changes which language has undergone. This holds true especially of those who are under the necessity of reading the Bible in a translation; and, as in the case of our translation, in a language remarkably different from the original, in many of its characteristics. That the sacred writers were, for the most part, unlettered men (a circumstance alluded to by Dr. Beecher), only serves to heighten this difficulty; as they must have been so much the more likely to use language in its *local* and *peculiar* sense, rather than in its general, precise, and philosophical sense. Add to this the effect which a man's theological prejudices and prepossessions must have upon his mind, in judging of the obvious import of many passages of Scripture. If he has been trained to associate, inseparably, a peculiar theological sense to certain words of frequent recurrence in the sacred writings (such, for example, as *grace*, *election*, *justification*, &c.), it will follow, of course, that many of the passages in which these words are found will suggest to him a meaning; and it will seem to him their *obvious* meaning, though widely different from their true meaning, and, indeed, from their obvious meaning to all unprejudiced readers."

I must here protest against the reviewer's coming over to my side without striking his colors; and, with all the tokens of continued opposition, leading the incautious reader to conclude that I must be wrong, because the reviewer reasons conclusively. I had said, that, if the obvious import of revelation is not the true import, the common people have no Bible. This conclusion the reviewer calls indecent and irreverent;

and yet, with all his might, is assisting me to establish the truth of the conclusion. For what other purpose has he gathered around the sacred text the clouds and darkness of changes in manners and modes of thinking, and controversies, and technical meanings, and translations, and prejudices, — or to what other conclusion do they tend, — but to prove that the common people have no Bible? Tindal has quoted all these difficulties, and many more, from Bishop Taylor, to prove that a true exposition of the Bible is utterly a hopeless thing; that the Bible is a book of no use, and that men can safely rely only on reason and the religion of nature. The papists have alleged the same difficulties, to prove that the Bible can be of no use to the common people, and ought to be taken from them, as a book which would lead them astray. And Socinians have borrowed from infidels and papists these hackneyed objections, which have been answered, and still repeated, beyond the "thousandth" time, to mitigate the criminality of doctrinal error, and invest reason with a sort of dictatorship in deciding the import of the sacred text. And the conclusion to which Bishop Taylor himself comes is, that "these and a thousand more difficulties have made it impossible for a man, in so great a variety of matter, not to be deceived." I have stated hypothetically, that, if the obvious import of the Bible, according to the meaning of the language in common use, is not the true import, the common people have no Bible; and Tindal, and the Pope, and Bishop Taylor, and the reviewer, all seem to say, that the meaning obvious to the common people is not the meaning which was present to the minds of the inspired writers, — a conclusion which the reviewer calls indecent and irreverent, and in which I entirely agree with him. But does the reviewer really intend to renounce translation as impossible, and turn us over to reason and the

light of nature? And if he does not intend this, what does he intend? I have long been offended with the flippant style in which Unitarians have dealt out these infidel and popish objections against the Bible, to dim the atmosphere of common vision, and gather doubts about the sacred book; — and a better service can scarcely be rendered to the cause of Christianity than to shed daylight upon the fog, and drive it away.

What, then, — as the metaphysician said of a poem, — what do all these difficulties *prove?* They prove that the common people cannot translate the Bible from the original languages; — but do they prove that learned men cannot translate the Bible? It is certainly a difficult work, putting in requisition intellect, learning, judgment, candor, application, piety, and prayer; but is it, with these qualifications, impossible? Have such changes in manners and customs happened, since the Bible was written, as have thrown a fatal eclipse on the human mind? Have the Greek and Latin classics perished, and are all their beauties — thoughts which they never knew — supplied by the genius of modern men? But if profane authors may be understood by the learned, why may not the Bible be understood? Have all the effects of time fallen exclusively upon the Word of life, while the follies and impurities of heathen mythology have come down to us correctly translated? The Bible *can* be understood by men acquainted with the language in which it was written. No changes have happened which have sealed up that holy book, or thrown darkness and doubt upon its illuminated pages.

What, then, do these difficulties prove? Do they prove that, when learned men have ascertained the meaning of the Bible, they cannot clothe it in language obvious to popular apprehension? If they cannot, the common people have no Bible; and if they can, all this talk about changes of

customs and manners, &c., is like the smoke which vanquished warriors create to conceal their retreat. Why cannot the meaning of the Bible be made intelligible to the common people, in other languages? It may be made intelligible. It has been; and there is one fact that proves it. It is the fact that all men understand or misunderstand the proof-texts concerning doctrine alike. There is none, among all the translations, exclusively Calvinistic, or Arminian, or Unitarian. In all versions, as the reviewer says, all have their respective proof-texts; and all the texts relied on by each are the same in all versions. A Calvinistic proof-text in one version is a Calvinistic proof-text in every other version; which shows that, whoever may be wrong, the Bible is correctly translated.

What, then, do these difficulties, so much vaunted by Unitarians, prove? They prove that no translation is absolutely perfect in every possible respect. But what if it be so — that no translation is exact? Does it follow that *every* translation is not so far exact as to communicate, in a manner obvious to popular apprehension, the entire mind of the Spirit on the subject of doctrine? A writer may spell badly, and write ungrammatically, and yet be understood. There may be thirty thousand various readings, and not one of them obscure the flood of light which is poured on every doctrine of the Bible. It may not be difficult, perhaps, to show that, on some passages, clouds and darkness rest, to this day. But does the eclipse of one star hide the light of all the rest, and blot out the sun? What if some points of chronology are matters of doubtful disputation,— do these obscure the law of God, or the revealed account of human depravity, or the doctrine of regeneration, or the nature and necessity of repentance and faith? Some of the prophecies are obscure, as they were designed to be, until the hand of time should

lift the veil. But what has prophetical obscurity to do with the doctrines of the Bible, whose object it is to instruct, and which are of no use except as they are made intelligible? And if the changes through which the Bible has passed have thrown obscurity and doubt on some passages which relate to doctrine, are all the proof-texts on all the doctrines to be rejected as incompetent witnesses, and thrown into a dungeon? If some of the figures which are employed to teach doctrine are not intelligible from local allusions, is the light of all figures, therefore, put under a bushel? And what if the light of every metaphor in the Bible were put out,—is the Bible all metaphor? Are not the doctrines still revealed so plainly in literal language as to render the belief of them a duty, and the disbelief of them a sin? And as to prejudice, I hope the reviewer will not advocate the maxim that a man may avail himself of his own crime, or that the Bible is not obvious to honest minds, because it presents a darkened page to those that hate the light, neither come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. It was for the blindness of prejudice that the Jews were blinded more; and for that darkness of the understanding which was caused by the heart, that they were hardened more, and given over to believe a lie. And as to controversies and different opinions, it remains to be proved that these have resulted from any obscurity of the Bible concerning doctrine, and have not resulted rather from pride, and passion, and selfishness, and ignorance, and enmity against God. The Bible may be a plain book to any man who will do the will of God: while, to the wicked, who will do wickedly, it may remain a sealed book.

I am aware that just opinions are made neither better nor more true by authority, and yet the concurrence of human opinion upon a given subject increases the presumptive evi-

dence of its truth. In confirmation of this view, I quote with satisfaction the testimony of Locke. Speaking of the Bible, he calls it a collection of writings designed by God for the instruction of the illiterate bulk of mankind in the way of salvation; and therefore generally, and in necessary points, to be understood in the plain, direct meaning of the words and phrases, such as they may be supposed to have had in the mouths of the speakers who used them.

The Christian Examiner, for May and June, 1824, in an article entitled, "Notes on the Bible," says: "Had the copies of the New Testament which have come down to us, in their transmission through successive centuries, and versions from one language to another, suffered changes of such a nature as to render it uncertain what were the facts and events originally narrated, what were the principles of the Christian institution, what were the real character and actions of its founder, and what the doctrine he promulgated, *then* indeed must we resign our confidence in the sacred text; for then it would be impossible to learn from it, with any degree of certainty, what Christianity originally was."* Now, if all this, too, is indecent and irreverent, and, of course, untrue,— and if such changes have attended the transmission of the Bible to us, that what seems to the common people the direct and obvious import of the text is not the real import which was present to the minds of the inspired writers,— then I beg leave to ask the reviewer what the common people are to do. They cannot read the Bible in the original languages; and they cannot find its import in the translation, according to the import of language in common use, the only language which they can understand. How, then, are they to come to the knowledge

*I have heard it suggested that this article was written by the reviewer himself; — but of the fact I have no evidence.

of the truth? Shall they abandon the maxim that the Bible is the religion of Protestants, and believe as HIS HOLINESS and the CHURCH believe? This would be to turn back the hour-hand of time to the dark ages, and pour contempt upon the discoveries in mental philosophy and biblical learning which have blessed these latter days. Shall they study, then, evangelical commentators? These, alas! through ignorance and prejudice, do but "lead to bewilder, and dazzle to blind;" and the Quakers, and the Baptists, and the Antinomians, are all in the same condemnation, relying on proof-texts which, taken from their connection, *seem* to favor their views. What, then, shall the common people do? They must read Unitarian commentators;—for, after all these appalling difficulties from changes of customs, and theological prepossessions, and technical phrases, there is a meaning on the sacred pages which is direct and obvious, not only to the inspired writers, but to the minds of unprejudiced readers even now,—a meaning which Unitarians, being happily without prejudice, do see, while the rest of the world sit in darkness. All those passages which teach the humanity of Christ have, somehow, come down to us unobscured, through all the perils of time; and "in a language remarkably different from the original." Indeed, having cleared the breakers of Orthodoxy, and gotten into still water, the reviewer himself seems to regard the Bible as a very plain book, whose real import is obtained by a strict adherence to the direct and obvious meaning of the terms, as they would and must be understood by plain, unlettered men. If he were called upon to give a comparative view of Unitarianism and Calvinism, there are no points on which he would insist more, in showing the decided superiority of the former, than on its strict adherence to the plain meaning of the plain parts of the Scriptures; and on the ease

with which the whole system can be understood and comprehended by men of all capacities. There are, he thinks, but a few passages which occasion any difficulty; and these, by the light of plainer passages, by the tenor of the Gospel, the leading objects of the dispensation, and the researches of scholars, are "in most cases" explained "in a manner perfectly satisfactory." Nay, so entirely have all the clouds been dissipated which lowered just now upon the inspired page, and with such effulgence has the sun broken out upon it, that the whole anti-Calvinistic or Unitarian system can be understood and comprehended by men of all capacities. Indeed, the texts which contradict all the leading doctrines of Calvinism are so plain, "that the whole constitution and complexion of the Bible CAN convey NO OTHER meaning to plain, unlettered men, than is irreconcilably opposed to the fundamental principles of Calvinism." Really, one might as well reason with a pendulum as with such a writer,—never in one place, but first in one extreme and then in the other. I hope, however, he will stick to his last opinion, namely, that the direct and obvious meaning of the Bible, as it is understood by plain, unlettered men, is the true meaning; and then he will only have to account for the facts by which I have endeavored to prove that the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the direct and obvious import of the sacred text as it is understood by plain, unlettered men, and for his own admissions that the predominant import which in all ages actually has been received from the sacred text is not the Unitarian, but the evangelical import.

The facts which I wish him to explain are, the confession of learned infidels that the evangelical is the true doctrinal import of the Bible, corroborated by the confession of learned Unitarians after they have stripped of inspired infallibility the

opinions and reasonings of prophets and apostles. I desire him also to account for the fact, that the papists, who in doctrine have been, as a body, anti-Calvinistic, should have been so bitter in their opposition to the circulation of the Bible, as tending only to mislead the common people, if the whole constitution and complexion of the moral parts of the Bible *can* convey no other meaning to a plain, unlettered man, than one irreconcilably opposed to the fundamental principles of Calvinism; and that the Reformers should have regarded the translation and spread of "this decidedly anti-Calvinistic volume" as the sword of the Spirit, in putting to flight the armies of the aliens. But especially would I request the assistance of the reviewer, to enable me to comprehend how "a book so decidedly Unitarian that the whole system can with ease be understood by men of all capacities, and no other meaning can be understood by a plain, unlettered man, than one irreconcilably opposed to Calvinism,"—how such a book should have actually been understood to teach the evangelical system of doctrine by a vast majority of mankind who have read the Bible; "and should not have been understood to teach the Unitarian system by persons enough, at any time or in any nation, to lay a foundation for comparing the practical tendency of the two systems:" for he says, "unfortunately, Unitarianism has never yet *prevailed* in any country, and therefore this comparison cannot be made."

NO. III.

To the Editor of the Christian Examiner.

Sir:—In confirmation of the charge that the argument contained in my discourse has been evaded and misrepresented

by the reviewer, I beg leave to call your attention once more to this subject.

Evasion 2. The second evasion respects my argument from the identity of the effects produced by the Gospel and by the evangelical system. The argument stands thus: In the moral world, moral causes operating in the same circumstances will produce the same effects. The heart of man is the moral world, and, whether in a civilized or in an uncivilized state, is the same now as it was in a civilized or uncivilized state eighteen hundred years ago. The Gospel, also, the greatest moral cause which ever operated in the world, is the same now as in the apostolic age. If, then, there be a system of doctrines, at the present day, whose effects, universally, are the same with those produced by the faith delivered to the saints, that system is the faith delivered to the saints. Identity of moral effect proves identity of moral cause.

To this argument the reviewer replies by an ASSERTION that the maxim that moral causes will produce the same effects in the same circumstances, is a very questionable maxim: and next, by representing me as having said that the heart of a civilized and of an uncivilized man are in the same circumstances; which he proceeds to disprove by showing the great difference between European, Owhyean, and Hottentot, and between bigoted Jews and high-minded Americans. And thus my entire superstructure of goodly arguments, rising on this supposed identity, touched by the reviewer's wand of truth, tumbles into ruin. But have I said that the heart of a civilized and of an uncivilized man are precisely in the same circumstances? Nowhere. The sentence is, "The Gospel is the same now as in the apostolic age; and the heart of man, civilized or uncivilized, is also the same." The same as what? The same as in the apostolic age. This is the

only filling up of which this elliptical sentence, or the tenor of my argument, admits. I was attempting to show that the heart of man is in the same condition now as in the apostolic age; and it would have been irrelevant and absurd to say, that the heart of a civilized and of an uncivilized man are in the same circumstances. My position is, that in whatever condition of civilization or barbarism the Gospel found the heart of man in the apostolic age, it finds it in the same diversity of condition now; and must produce now, on the mass of human mind, however diversified by circumstances, the same effects which it produced on the same diversified mass eighteen hundred years ago. The natural sun does not produce the same effects, exactly, upon the mountain-top and the valley, or upon the forest and the cultivated field. But it produces the same effects, from age to age, upon the mountain and upon the valley, and upon the forest and the cultivated field; and it produces the same general effect, from age to age, upon a country including all these varieties. In like manner, the Sun of righteousness produces, now, all the specific difference occasioned by diversity of condition eighteen hundred years ago; and produces, universally, all the great effects which resulted from his action upon the diversified mass of human mind. This is my meaning; this is the import of my language,—the bearing of my arguments; the whole of which the reviewer has answered only by perverting it.

It is now time to remind the reviewer that his position, that external circumstances control and modify the effects of the Gospel, is proved only by his own ASSERTION; and is not true to the extent which he supposes, and which his argument requires. I have stated a great variety of effects which the Gospel produced, and which the evangelical system produces, and which the liberal system does not produce. He

does not deny the facts, but accounts for them upon the supposition that the condition in which the Gospel acts on the human heart now is different from what it was in the apostolic age. According to the reviewer, then, external circumstances are more powerful than the Gospel itself. They have the effect of robbing the Gospel of all its primitive energies, and of bestowing the spoil upon a system of false doctrine. The liberal system, which, according to the reviewer, is the Gospel, is condemned, with a cold heart and paralytic arm, to stand by and witness its own primitive victories achieved, and its own primitive blessings scattered, by a heart of deception and a right hand of falsehood. It is not enough, in order to answer my argument, to ASSERT that circumstances are changed. It must be proved that they are changed so much, or can be so much changed, as to strip the Gospel of its primitive moral tendencies, and to clothe a system of false doctrine with the remarkable power of producing all the great prominent good effects which, in the primitive age, the Gospel produced.

I must remind the reviewer, once more, that he has assumed the fact, that the Gospel may be controlled by circumstances as extensively as he supposes, not only without evidence, but in opposition to matters of fact of undeniable notoriety. What is there in the relative condition of civilized and uncivilized men, or in all that wide variety of circumstance which characterizes high and low, rich and poor, in civilized communities, which should cause error to produce the effects of truth? Are not the great laws of human nature the same; and are not the hearts of all men affected in the same manner, substantially, by a sense of obligation, and guilt, and danger, and merciful deliverance? Are not the rules of duty the same, the objects of affection the same, and the motives the same, which the Gospel presents to all men

of every condition; and are not the great outlines of Christian character the same,—the holiness, the repentance, the faith, and the hope and peace and joy, the meekness and humility and brotherly love? The Gospel is a cause that touches all the great springs of moral action which are common to man in every possible condition. It operates on the common principles of our nature independently of external circumstances, and produces everywhere the same glorious change. At Rome, in the palace, and among barbarians, the Christian character was the same. And, to this day, the facts are so, under evangelical preaching. Our ecclesiastical societies include the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant; but, during a revival of religion, some of every condition become Christians. They afford credible evidence of a change of heart, a change in their views and affections, and of such a change as took place under the Gospel as preached by the apostles; and though external circumstances may modify the mode of expressing, and the strength of evangelical affections, yet the principles in which all hearts are alike must cease, before the Gospel can be stripped of its primitive effects by any possible combination of external causes.

In confirmation of this reasoning from the nature of mind, we appeal to facts. The Gospel did produce, upon every variety of character, and in every variety of condition, substantially the same effects; and the same, also, which the evangelical system now produces, in the same variety of external condition. It produced the same conviction of sin and sense of danger, and prompted the same inquiries, and gave the same answers, and produced the same change in the affections of the heart, and conduct of life. On the day of Pentecost, while Peter preached, Parthians and Medes, Cretes and Arabians, Egyptians and Cyrenians, Romans, Jews, and pros-

elytes, were pricked in the heart, and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And three thousand of this mixed multitude, in such different circumstances, received the word gladly, and were baptized and added to the church, and continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine. And wherever the Gospel was preached after this, it brought some of every condition to bow the knee to Christ; and whenever evangelical missionaries preach the same truths among the heathen, the same effects follow.

Evasion 3. This respects my argument derived from the sameness of the objections brought against the doctrine of the Bible in former ages, and those which are urged now against the evangelical system. I showed that the same objections were urged against the decrees of God, original sin, entire depravity, moral inability, regeneration, justification by faith, and the sovereignty of God in having mercy on whom he will, as taught by prophets, and by Christ and his apostles, as are urged in modern days against these doctrines, as explained and taught by evangelical men. From which I infer that evangelical men preach the Gospel as Christ and his apostles did.

These objections, made alike to the doctrines of the Gospel and the evangelical system, the reviewer does not do me the favor to name or state. But he perverts the argument, by saying that it is "something new under the sun, to think of proving a system by the number and weight of objections to which it is liable." But did the reviewer really understand me to urge the number and weight of objections which are brought against the evangelical system as evidence of its truth? Could he not and did he not perceive, that my argument is, "The evangelical system is the Gospel,—not because so many objections are urged against it, but—because, on

all the leading doctrines, it produces the same objections which the Gospel produces"? If he could not see this, he requires our pity, instead of forgiveness; and if he did see the bearings of my argument, I leave it for him to find a name for the deed. He attempts, however, to set aside the argument in its true import (something of an indication that he understood it), not by denying the premises, but by an ASSERTION that the objections made to the preaching of the apostles "arose from some misapprehension of their meaning, or some prejudice of the age or people; but that, now their language is understood, and these prejudices have passed away, to say that the Orthodox system continues liable to the same objections, does not prove it to be the same system with that which the apostles taught, but a different one."

I would here inquire of the reviewer how it has come to pass that the language of the apostles on doctrinal subjects should be understood now better than it was by their countrymen, to whom they spake in their own tongue, and "in the local and peculiar sense,"—that is, the most common and popular sense. Has the language of the apostles become more and more intelligible by age, "amid all the changes of customs and manners, and modes of thinking, through which it has come down to us?" These were causes, just now, which shed disastrous twilight on the sacred page; and rendered *that* only the obvious import of the apostles' language which was present to their minds, and was communicated to the minds of their hearers, to whom they spake in their own tongue, and in the local and popular sense. But now it seems that Jews and Greeks, learned and unlearned, misunderstood the apostles, and made irrelevant objections; but that modern critics, impeded by no such local difficulties, have, with great ease, discerned and set forth the true import. Undoubtedly

the reviewer has a right to one side of this question, and I have no objection that he should take his choice; but by what authority, as exigencies press, he takes possession alternately of both sides, I do not perceive, and must remonstrate against the liberty which he seems disposed to take in this respect.

But did the Jews misunderstand the preaching of the apostles? If they did, they misunderstood the preaching of Christ; for he and his apostles preached the same doctrine. If they did, a majority of the nation misunderstood; and as "Unitarianism has never prevailed in any country," a majority of mankind, in all ages, who have read the gospels and epistles, have misunderstood them. But is it credible that Jesus Christ and his apostles, speaking to their countrymen in the local and popular use of terms, should be misunderstood by a majority of their hearers, and by a majority in every age who have read the New Testament? Did uninspired men ever attempt to make themselves understood, with such ill success as must have attended the efforts of Jesus Christ and his apostles to teach mankind? I have another question to ask. If the Jews, and a majority of mankind, have misunderstood the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, how is it to be accounted for that in all ages they should have misunderstood them so much alike as to produce the same objections? The reviewer has decided that "the Gospel, seen under different lights and in different connections, must encounter other prejudices, raise other difficulties, and start other objections." Of course, if evangelical men misunderstand the Gospel now, they misunderstand it differently from what the Jews did, and must be supposed to create, by their preaching, different objections. Instead of this, the Gospel, as misunderstood by the Jews and by evangelical men now, produces extensively the same objections. But do

the same objections lie against different systems of theology? Do the Calvinistic and the Arminian systems produce the same objections? Would two attorneys, replying to an argument which each misunderstood in a different manner, reply to it as if they understood it exactly alike? Only admit that the primitive objections to the Gospel and modern objections to the evangelical system are the same, and the conclusion is forced upon us that the Gospel and the evangelical system are the same.

But the Jews did not misunderstand Christ. He himself declares that they understood him, and that this was the cause of their opposition to him. "Ye have seen and hated both me and my Father." "They hated me without a cause." "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." He represents also the opposition of the Jews as produced by a criminal state of heart, common to man, and which would perpetuate, to other ages, opposition to the Gospel. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

We come, then, to the same conclusion as before. The Gospel, as preached by Christ and his apostles, produced a great variety of objections. The evangelical system, as preached in these days, produces the same objections. Therefore, the evangelical system and the Gospel are the same.

Evasion 4. This respects the argument derived from the classes of men who embraced and rejected the Gospel, and who now embrace and reject the evangelical system. In its

logical form, the argument stands thus: There was something in the Gospel which made it, relatively, unacceptable to the rich, and learned, and voluptuous part of the community, and, relatively, more acceptable to the common people. But the doctrines of the Gospel, and the circumstances of rich men and the common people, are substantially the same as in the days of the apostles. That system of doctrine, therefore, which is regarded by the higher classes of society and by the common people, now, as the Gospel was regarded in the primitive age, is the Gospel. But the evangelical system is treated by the learned and the unlearned, and the rich and the poor, as the Gospel was treated in the apostolic age; therefore, the evangelical system is the Gospel.

This argument the reviewer evades and misrepresents, by saying that it admits the fact that the Gospel will be "more likely to be embraced by men, the more ignorant they are on other subjects, and therefore the more liable to be deceived on this." But my argument contains no such admission. It rests on facts solely, and not on any assumed or implied principle; — on facts notorious and undeniable: namely, that the same classes of men rejected and the same classes gladly received the Gospel, who do now reject or receive gladly the evangelical system; — implying that the Gospel and the evangelical system are the same, from the identity of their effects on the same classes of men. But if the *principle* had been assumed that the common people are in a more favorable condition to judge of moral truth than men of literary eminence, and of wealth and high station, it would not follow that the *more* ignorant men are, the *more* likely they are to see and embrace the truth; any more than it would follow that, because the medium between poverty and riches is a happier condition than great wealth, therefore the poorer a man is, the happier he is.

But if we had asserted that the common people were more likely to understand moral truth than some men of great wealth, and powerful intellect, and great learning, we should have said nothing which could be sneered at, without sneering at the Bible. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; for it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." We have mournful evidence, in the history of the heathen world, of the renowned exploits of intellect, while midnight rested on the world, in respect to moral truth. Greece and Rome, with their immortality of intellect, and genius, and taste, knew not God, and worshipped idols: and if a man must be converted, and become a little child, before he can enter the kingdom of God, an adequate cause would seem to be disclosed for the fact that not many mighty, not many noble, are called. Indeed, the Gospel is so plain that the poor and the simple may understand it; but it is not so plain as to be understood without a sincere and prayerful attention to it, even by the learned. It is not capacity, so much as honest and prayerful attention, which makes the Gospel plain; and this attention, if it be bestowed by the common people, and withheld by philosophers and men of eminence, will make the one ignorant, and the other mighty, in the Scriptures. And when the books are opened which contain the record of human actions, perhaps it will be seen that the pious common people have devoted one hundred times more honest, prayerful attention to the Bible.

than multitudes whose talents and learning have gained them fame and self-confidence in the present life. After all, the true understanding of the Bible depends much upon the moral state of the heart; and great minds have great prejudices and aversions, and, if they are not pious, are hindered from embracing the truth by moral causes, which bear a fearful proportion to their great talents and extensive acquisitions.

But the reviewer denies that the aversion of rich men to the Gospel, in the primitive age, was produced by anything in the Gospel to which this class of men are peculiarly opposed; and ASSERTS that it was caused by temptations peculiar to their station in society at that time, and which have since passed away. But the Scriptures have decided that there is something in wealth and station which renders the Gospel always relatively offensive to persons of this description; — of course, the exception of the reviewer fails, and my argument remains unanswered.

Agur prays, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain;" — contrasting and deprecating alike the temptations of wealth and of extreme poverty. "Let not the rich man glory in his riches." "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." "The rich man answereth roughly." "Labor not to be rich." "The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Wealth is called the "mammon of unrighteousness," so great is its liability to perversion; "Woe unto you, ye rich men; for ye have received your consolation." "The cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, sprang up and choked the word." It was a certain rich man that projected to pull down and rebuild, the night that his

soul was required of him. It is the rich who "fall into temptations and snares, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." It is the rich man that fadeth away, like the grass, in his ways. It was the rich who oppressed and persecuted the primitive Christians. It is the rich who are directed to weep and howl for the misery that shall come upon them. It is rich men who weep over Babylon, while Heaven and the holy prophets and apostles rejoice. And it is rich men, and mighty men, who cry to the rocks, Fall on us; and to the mountains, Cover us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? No such language as this is ever held in the Bible towards persons in the common walks of life. These passages show that there is something in wealth and its attendants, learning and station, which renders the self-denial required in the Gospel peculiarly difficult, at all times, to persons of this description. The language is not confined to the time of Christ. It begins far back in the Old Testament, and comes down to a period long subsequent to the primitive age.

Nor is it difficult to perceive and account for these tendencies of elevated condition to impede the reception of the Gospel. Exalted stations increase self-estimation, and render proportionally offensive the charge of guilt and danger. Intellectual power augments self-confidence and pride, and increases the reluctance of the heart to rely implicitly on the testimony of God, and receive his kingdom as a little child. Wealth, and its cares and pleasures, monopolize time, engross thought, captivate affection, prevent attendance on the means of grace, or wholly prevent, or speedily obliterate, their impression. Men of wealth, and taste, and eminence, are unwilling to be preached to or spoken to with that earnestness and directness of

application which constitute the chief means of success in the conviction and conversion of sinners. So that, through their pride, and our fear of man, they often do not enjoy the means of grace in the same degree in which they are enjoyed by the common people. Their condition and business in life bring them, also, more into contact with the world, and less into fellowship with the people of God, than is true of any other class of society,— exposing them to greater temptations, with fewer means of preservation. Wealth also multiplies the facilities and the temptations to a voluptuous life; while a bad life increases at once the aversion to the Gospel, and the temptation to irreligion and infidelity. Indeed, if there be on earth a class of men to whom the requisitions of meekness and lowliness of mind, and of temperance and strict morality, must be peculiarly offensive, it must be men of elevated minds in the higher orders of society, and, especially, pleasure-loving voluptuaries. There are, then, in the very circumstance of wealth and elevated condition, moral causes of peculiar power, and permanent, universal operation, to render the real Gospel of our Lord peculiarly unpalatable. And there was not, as the reviewer ASSERTS, anything which rendered it peculiarly a matter of interest, and policy, and ambition, to men of character and wealth among them, to oppose the Gospel, beside that peculiarity of character associated with their condition, and which consisted in the peculiar aversion of their hearts to the humbling requisitions of the Gospel. There was nothing in the Gospel dispensation which was not a matter of prediction in the Old Testament, and attended by evidence in the New which nothing but the darkness of a heart obdurately wicked could resist. And it was for yielding to such prejudices that they were abandoned of Heaven, and given up to that blindness which has continued to this day.

There was no odium in embracing the Gospel, and no policy or ambition concerned in rejecting it, which the opposition to it emanating from their own hearts did not first create. The acceptance of the Gospel by the higher orders of society would not have endangered their property, or lowered their relative standing in society. The new dispensation was as consistent with the possession of wealth and station as the old; and if men of wealth and office in the Jewish church had embraced the Gospel, they could have enjoyed, as good men, in church and in state, the same relative elevation which they held in the Jewish church in the character of unprincipled and wicked men. They were not, therefore, afraid of the common people, and of the loss of popularity; for the common people were disposed to acknowledge the claims of Christ, and were prevented from doing it by the influence of men in the higher orders of society. And as to persecution, who would have persecuted, if the rich, and mighty, and noble, among the Jews, had embraced the Gospel? But, had there been some circumstances peculiar to the primitive age, which gave a temporary increase of power to the temptations of wealth, the cessation of what was peculiar would not annihilate the influence of those temptations of wealth which were permanent and universal. Still, there would be, then and now, something in the Gospel which would render it relatively acceptable to the common people, and relatively unacceptable to persons in the higher orders of society. That system of doctrines, therefore, which is regarded by men of wealth and eminence, and by the common people also, as the Gospel was regarded by them, is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Evasion 5. This respects my argument derived from the efficacy of the Gospel, and of the evangelical system, to reclaim

those who have long been under the dominion of vicious habits. My statement is:

1. That the evangelical system, like the Gospel, reclaims those who have been long under the dominion of vicious habits.

2. That it reclaims them suddenly, as the Gospel did.

3. That, in many cases, the era of reformation is the abandonment of the liberal system, and the adoption of the evangelical; and under such circumstances as clearly show that evangelical doctrines were the moral cause of the reformation.

4. That instances of the reformation of vicious persons are rare events under Unitarian preaching, if they exist at all.

5. That such reformations never take place suddenly; nor at the time of abandoning Orthodox and adopting Unitarian doctrines; nor, evidently, as the moral effect of the latter system.

6. I confirm the efficacy of evangelical preaching, and the inefficacy of Unitarian preaching, to reclaim the vicious, by the testimony of Dr. Chalmers.

To this the reviewer replies:

1. That I have assumed that all who are not Orthodox Christians are liberal Christians.

2. That when I speak of liberal Christians renouncing their vicious and profligate habits upon embracing Orthodoxy, there is an absurdity in the proposition, which refutes itself.

3. That some nominal Christians go over to the Orthodox party and reform their lives, he admits as *probable:* But,

4. He ASSERTS that the same is true of nominal Chris-

tians who come over to the liberal system, and embrace it sincerely, as can be testified by a thousand examples.

In reply, I have only to say, that I have nowhere assumed that all those who are not Orthodox Christians are liberal Christians; and that I have nowhere fallen into the absurdity of speaking of liberal Christians renouncing their vicious habits upon embracing Orthodoxy. My argument has no reference to Christians of any kind. It begins and ends with "persons long under the dominion of vicious habits." The reviewer, therefore, has shifted the ground of my argument, so as to enable him to seem to reply to it, while he passes it untouched. Had he used the terms of my argument, his reply would have stood thus: "When Dr. B. speaks of persons long under the dominion of vicious habits as renouncing their vicious and profligate habits on embracing Orthodoxy, there is an absurdity in the proposition, which refutes itself." Where? Not in my proposition, but in one which the reviewer has himself imagined, and ascribed to me. Again, he ought to have said, "That some persons long under the dominion of vicious habits go over to the Orthodox party, and reform their lives upon it, is probable. But the same is also true of vicious and profligate persons who come over to the liberal system and embrace it sincerely; as can be testified by a thousand examples." This is what the reviewer was required to say, to meet my argument; and if it is what he meant to say, I would ask him why he qualifies the asserted fact, of the reformation of profligates when they change from the Orthodox to the liberal system, by saying, "if they embrace it sincerely." My argument stands on the unqualified fact, that when profligates turn from liberal to Orthodox opinions, they do reform; but the reviewer replies, that the same is true when profligates turn from Orthodox to

liberal opinions, *if they embrace them sincerely;* — admitting, as I should think, that many vicious and profligate men turn from Orthodox to liberal opinions, without reformation; and implying a consciousness that the fact is too notorious to be denied. I would ask the reviewer again, whether he does, upon his conscience, believe that profligates who abandon Orthodoxy and go over to the liberal system are as often reformed by the transition as when profligates abandon the liberal system and embrace the Orthodox. And, once more, I would ask the reviewer to produce one well-authenticated instance of a profligate person reclaimed, on abandoning Orthodox and embracing liberal opinions, in such circumstances as clearly to show that his liberal opinions were the moral cause of his reformation. One well-authenticated fact, illustrating the reforming efficacy of the liberal system, will furnish more evidence than one thousand ASSERTED reformations; and it cannot be deemed a hardship by the reviewer, that he be required to substantiate, by other testimony than ASSERTION, one of a thousand reformations produced by the liberal system, every one of which "may be easily proved."

Evasion 6. This respects the argument concerning the efficacy of the Gospel and the evangelical system to produce revivals of religion. I stated a number of the effects which the Gospel produced, such as sudden fear, and conviction of sin, followed by sudden joy, and practical reformation, and a holy life; and showed that evangelical preaching produces the same effects, and that Unitarian preaching does not produce these effects.

To have met this argument fairly, the reviewer should have denied either the premises or the conclusion. Instead of this, he wanders away from the argument, and talks about his *suspicion* that Unitarians may have carried their opposition

to revivals to an extreme; but subjoins that it is not for want of any power in Unitarian principles to produce revivals, that they so seldom occur among Unitarians; but because they differ from the Orthodox as to their value and importance. But how does the reviewer ascertain this unapplied power of Unitarian doctrines to produce revivals of religion? The evidence which he gives to his readers of the fact is his own ASSERTION,— a kind of evidence for which he manifests an undue partiality; and I would humbly submit the question, whether it might not be well to establish the efficacy of Unitarian doctrines to produce revivals of religion by at least one experiment. If it should happen to succeed, it could do no great harm; and it would remove more doubts, and produce more conviction, on the subject, than twenty assertions. I cannot, at the same time, but indulge a strong curiosity to witness the experiment, and see how Unitarians can contrive to make their doctrines produce the phenomena of revivals of religion: — how the doctrine that men are not depraved by nature can make the hearers *feel* as if they were; and how the doctrine that men are not entirely depraved can cause them to feel that they are desperately wicked; how the doctrine that they can be saved without an atonement can produce despair of salvation only through the atonement; how the doctrine that they can be saved by repentance and good wishes can inspire the hope of salvation only by the righteousness which is by faith; how the doctrine that men do not need a radical change of heart can possess them of the idea that they shall perish without such a change; how the doctrine that men can and do accomplish their own moral renovation gradually, without any special and supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit, should extinguish all hope of attaining this change by their own endeavors, and only by the sovereign

and special interposition of the Holy Spirit; how the doctrine that men do not deserve much punishment, and are in very little danger even of that, can fill them with sudden fears of everlasting destruction, and with sudden joy at being delivered from the wrath to come; and, finally, how men who have not much that is old to lose, or that is new to gain, to fit them for heaven, can be made to feel that old things have passed away, and all things have become new.

I cannot pass from this topic without calling your attention to the manner in which the reviewer corroborates the argument he would overthrow. The Gospel rendered primitive Christians desirous of producing revivals of religion, and the evangelical system produces the same desire. They agree as to their "value and importance." While the liberal system renders some so opposed to revivals as to induce the use of "improper and indecorous language in speaking of them." Now, if Unitarians are, by their faith, brought under the influence of the Gospel, how does it come to pass that they feel so differently about the use and importance of revivals from what the primitive Christians felt; and, if the system of doctrine which the Orthodox are under is not the Gospel, how is it to be accounted for that they should estimate the use and importance of revivals just as the primitive Christians did?

Evasion 7. This respects my position, that the evangelical system produces the same traits of Christian character which the Gospel produced. To this the reviewer replies, that we are not agreed as to what constitutes truly Christian character. Of this fact I have long been sensible. We employ the same words to designate the Christian graces, but seldom, if ever, intend the same state of heart. This is the fearful difference between Unitarians and the Orthodox. Our religion

is as different from their religion as our doctrines; and so different is it, that if ours is true religion, theirs is not. Unitarians do not mean by holiness, repentance, and faith, the same things that the Orthodox mean by them; and they do not mean anything that, to our apprehension, amounts to true religion. My argument supposes that we differ in this important manner, and infers that our views are evangelical, because they produce the same kind of Christian experience which the Gospel produced. I specified the kind of experience to which I alluded,—a piety of the same solemnity and ardor, producing the same delight in public worship and associations for conference and prayer, the same solicitude for the awakening and conversion of sinners, the same moral courage in the avowal of their faith in the face of obloquy. And, to show that Unitarian piety is not the same thing, I alluded to the charges made against the religion of the Orthodox, as morose, and gloomy, and enthusiastic; to their lax attendance on public worship, and aversion to meetings for conference and prayer; to the ridicule cast by Unitarians on what the Orthodox consider the work of the Spirit, in the conviction and conversion of sinners; and to the temporizing policy of that "very large proportion of men throughout our country, who, for their talents, and learning, and virtues, have the most influence in the community, and have it in their power to do the most towards giving a right direction to the public feeling and the public sentiment, who are prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions by an unwillingness to encounter obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful." All these facts on which I relied to prove the distinctive trait of Orthodox piety, as distinguished from Unitarian, and in accordance with the piety of the primitive age, the reviewer has passed over in utter silence. His phi-

losophy seems to have no curiosity to pry into the causes of these striking coincidences of Orthodox and primitive piety, and the no less striking discrepancies between primitive piety and Unitarian piety. Nay, plain as the argument might seem to be, he misunderstands, and evades, and misrepresents it. He replies as if I had begged the question that Orthodox views of Christian experience are correct, and that, as Unitarian doctrines do not produce the same sort of Christian experience, they cannot be the Gospel; whereas, the point to be ascertained was, whose views of doctrine are in accordance with the Gospel; and the agreement of Orthodox piety, and the disagreement of Unitarian piety, in the particulars specified, with the piety produced by the Gospel in the primitive age, is the evidence which I relied upon to prove that the hearts of the Orthodox are under the influence of the same system of doctrines which the hearts of primitive Christians were under, because they are the subjects of the same effects. I did not, therefore, beg the question; and the reviewer, as you must perceive, did evade and misrepresent my argument.

Evasion 8. This respects the identity of effects produced by the Gospel and by the evangelical system in respect to missionary enterprise. To this argument the reviewer replies by an ASSERTION that "it is not from any difference in their religious principles that Unitarians have been less forward and unanimous in this undertaking, but because they differ from the Orthodox as to the practicability and general expediency of any course of measures which has yet been proposed." An acute philosopher the reviewer must certainly be allowed to be. Hitherto, men of the greatest eminence, such as Bacon, Newton, and Locke, have been condemned to make experiments, and collect facts, to ascertain the nature

and tendency of things; but, to the mind of the reviewer, the powers of the Unitarian system to produce missionary enterprise are open and naked, without experiment. This must be allowed to be a royal road to science. But while he is so keen-sighted intuitively, how is it to be accounted for that such dimness of vision should have fallen upon his natural powers? He cannot perceive the point of an argument, and seems to go astray from it with instinctive honesty. He does not appear to understand that my argument turns on the fact that the primitive Christians under the preaching of the Gospel, and modern Christians under Orthodox preaching, *feel* and *act* alike on the subject of missions; and that Unitarians do not feel and act as the primitive Christians did, or as Orthodox Christians feel and act. Now, this agreement in feeling and conduct between the primitive church and the Orthodox church, and this difference in feeling and conduct between these and Unitarians, the reviewer admits; and yet seems not to know that the inference which I drew, and which philosophy warrants, is, that, therefore, the primitive churches and the Orthodox are acting under the impulse of the same moral causes; and, consequently, the evangelical system and the Gospel are the same, and the Unitarian system is not the Gospel. Instead, however, of troubling himself with facts, or inferences, he contents himself with giving us the reasons why Unitarians differ from the primitive Christians, and from the Orthodox, on the subject of missions. It is because Unitarians cannot be persuaded of the practicability and expediency of any course of measures. But how does it happen that the primitive Christians could be persuaded, and that Orthodox Christians can be persuaded, of the practicability and expediency of a course of measures, and that Unitarians cannot be persuaded? How has it happened that the primitive and the

Orthodox churches found a plan which "reason and God approved," while Unitarians can find no such plan? And how has it come to pass that this plan, which the primitive Christians approved, and which carried them forth into all the earth to preach the Gospel to every creature,—a plan which has bestowed upon the world all the blessings of the Gospel which it has enjoyed,—should be approved by the Orthodox following it up, and be disapproved, and distrusted, and neglected, by Unitarians? What plan do they want? What plan do they expect? A plan to convert the world without Bibles, and without the preaching of the Gospel, and without charitable aid at home, and self-denial and effort by missionaries abroad? The plan now in operation has been tried, has been approved of by reason and God, has done all that has been done to enlighten and save a world sitting in darkness. But this plan Unitarians do not like; and they have seated themselves in their easy-chairs, and sent out the proclamation, that, if anybody will bring them a plan which reason and God approve, and convince them that it is practicable, then they will — will what? embark in the work of missions? No; — "will have motives for engaging in it as near to infinite as finite beings are capable of feeling or comprehending." What if the apostles had sent out a proclamation to a world lying in wickedness, that, if anybody would bring them a plan for evangelizing the world, which they liked, and prove to them that it would succeed before they tried it, they should have motives almost infinite to make an attempt, and would then take the matter into serious consideration? What had been the condition of the world, had Unitarians, who do not approve of revivals of religion, and sudden conversions, and missionary efforts, preached on the day of Pentecost, and superintended the work of primitive

missions, instead of the apostles? And who is it that understand the Gospel correctly, and feel its power,—they who feel and act on the subject of missions as the apostles and primitive Christians felt and acted, or they who feel and act on the subject just the contrary from what they did?

NO IV.

To the Editor of the Christian Examiner.

Evasion 9. This respects my argument from the confidence and stability of the primitive Christians and the Orthodox in their doctrinal belief, and the fluctuation and uncertainty of Unitarians.

To this argument the reviewer replies, as if I had said only that Unitarians, educated in error, disencumber themselves of error, and embrace the truth gradually; and, with an air of triumph, asks "the gentlemen who are so fond of this argument, how they would expect, from what they know of the human mind, that a man who had been educated in the belief of many errors should succeed in shaking these errors off—at once, or successively?" And he asks again, "how it was with Luther and his partisans; did they renounce the errors of the Romish church at once, or successively? Nay, we would appeal to Dr. Beecher's own experience. Let him remember that he holds the very lowest form of that *new divinity* which the Calvinists of the south have publicly proclaimed to be at war with the philosophy of the human mind," &c.

I must remonstrate against the tax which the reviewer would impose on my memory. I do remember that I have not given up a single article of my doctrinal belief since the

hope of pardon dawned in my heart, and my initiatory preparation to preach the Gospel was concluded. I do remember that the reviewer has said that the epitome which I have given of my doctrinal belief is decidedly anti-Calvinistic. But how I can remember, at his bidding, and on his authority, that it is also "*the new divinity system in its lowest form*," is more than I can comprehend.

The whole reply of the reviewer proceeds on a misstatement of my argument. My position is, that the primitive Christians and the Orthodox are alike in this respect,—that they maintain, with singular confidence of their truth, the doctrines which they embrace, from the beginning to the end; but that Unitarians, who have been educated in Orthodoxy, abandon what they call one error, and adopt what afterwards they call another, and abandon this and adopt a third error, and abandon this and adopt a fourth, and are ever learning their past errors, and are confident of nothing but that in all their opinions, except the last, they have been wrong; while even these, as it is meet they should after such reiterated admonition of their frailty, they hold with such magnanimous uncertainty as renders confidence arrogant, and justifies the charitable hope that those who differ from them are as honest, as sincere, and as diligent and likely to be right, as themselves. Their charity seems to proceed upon the supposition that they themselves do not and cannot know the truth; while the charity and fellowship of the primitive Christians proceeded upon the supposition that, having the unction from the Holy One, they could know, and did know, the truth. It was to substantiate this charge of mutability, and changing from one error to another, that I quoted Priestley, without supposing that matters of fact lost their power of evidence by reiterated quotation, or that arguments oft repeated and unanswered should, therefore, wax old and pass away.

Let it not be said that we adopt our faith blindly, and make no progress in our knowledge of the truth, because we hold fast the first principles of our early profession. For elementary truths may be held in combination with error, which time and study may sift out; and the truths themselves are capable of almost indefinite varieties of statement and explanation, without abandoning the elementary positions themselves. These modified statements Unitarians mistake for a change in our principles, when we only avail ourselves, as Providence designed we should, of heresies and errors, to render our statement of doctrines more exact, and our positions more impregnable to assault. Our progress, therefore, consists not in tearing up old foundations, but in rearing and beautifying the superstructure that rests upon them; a progress in which, the further we proceed, the more we believe that our first principles are those of the oracles of God; and not a progress which convinces us that we never have been right, and makes us uncertain how long we shall believe as we now do, or what will come next.

The reviewer possesses, unquestionably, the most singular mind with which it has ever been my lot to come in contact. It would be invidious to charge him with evading, by design, the points of so many arguments; and yet, that he should always happen to do it, and with as much dexterity as if he possessed intellectual eyesight, must be acknowledged to be *singularly mysterious.*

Evasion 10. This respects my argument concerning the decisions of councils on the subject of heresy, in the early ages of the church. The argument stands thus: Doctrinal opinions, with large bodies of men, and widely extended, do not change suddenly; and, when they do change, the fact is one of such notoriety as is not forgotten in a few centuries.

The declaration of the universal church, therefore, represented in council during the first three centuries, that certain doctrines are heretical, is presumptive evidence that they are in opposition to the antecedently received opinions of the church. "From the nature, then, and known eras, of the several heresies," I infer, and state by way of inference, what must have been the antecedently received doctrines of the church.

The correctness of this inference the reviewer has a right to disprove, if he can, by historical evidence; but he has no right to say that what I have asserted as the conclusion of an argument is asserted as an *independent historical fact.* I shall not demand justice of the reviewer with the alternative of retraction, or lying under the imputation of a shameless calumny; I shall trust rather to his sense of honor, to his conscience, to the milk of human kindness in him, without attempting to terrify him by threats, to do his duty.

I am doubtful, however, whether the reviewer will be able even now to understand my argument, and I shall endeavor to make it still more intelligible. The council of Nice, A. D. 325, was the first council which was ever held in which the whole Christian church on earth was represented. It was convened by Constantine, the first Christian emperor, to decide what is the doctrine of the Bible, and of the primitive church, concerning the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this council, composed, according to some accounts, of two thousand ecclesiastics, of whom three hundred and eighteen were bishops, the doctrine of Arius was condemned as a heresy, and the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was declared to be the true faith, by a decision almost unanimous. Now, my argument stands thus: If the doctrine of Arius was the faith delivered to the saints, it must have continued to be the received opinion of the church, at least during the life-time

of the apostles; which, including the life of John, takes in about the first century. From the close of the first century to the council of Nice, is two hundred and twenty-five years. If, then, the Arian is the true faith, it must have ceased from the whole church on earth during two hundred and twenty-five years, and in the same time the heresy of Christ's Divinity must have come in, and been received universally, and without controversy. So that, when the whole church met, by delegation, to investigate the matter, nearly every delegate, from every country, came with the belief that the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ had always been an article of the Orthodox or primitive faith. It is as if, two hundred and twenty-five years after the settlement of New England, it should be claimed that the churches of New England were Arminian from the beginning; and a council should be called, composed of delegates from the churches, to decide what was the primitive faith of the New England churches, and should decide with great unanimity that it was Calvinistic. Now, would the faith of the New England fathers, if it had been Arminian, sink into total oblivion all over New England, without noise or controversy, and the Calvinistic system without noise or controversy universally come in, so that, in two hundred and twenty-five years, a council convened by public authority, on purpose to determine what was the primitive faith of New England, should with great unanimity decide that it was Calvinistic, and should declare the Arminian system to be a heresy? But, if we suppose some in the churches to have survived the apostle John fifty years, and some in the Nicene council to have known the received opinion of the church for fifty years before, we reduce the time in which the created nature of Christ, if taught by the apostles, must have been forgotten, and his Divinity have taken its place, without

resistance or controversy, to one hundred and twenty-five years. I have said that the laws of the human mind forbid the supposition of a universal change in so short a time; and that we may as well suppose that all the rivers in the Roman empire were reverted in their course during one or two hundred years, and that all the naturalists in the Roman empire, convened by authority to decide which was their primitive direction, should, with great unanimity, decide, against fact, that they had always run in their present direction.

The argument in respect to the doctrines of Pelagius rests on the same principle; and is stronger, in proportion as the difficulty of supposing an unresisted, universally forgotten change in six or eight fundamental points of doctrine, is greater than the supposition of such a change in a single doctrine. This argument, which I hope the reviewer will now be able to understand, he attempts to set aside by direct historical testimony. It is to be noted, however, that he relies on the testimony of eight men, of different centuries and different countries, and which, if it were relevant and unimpeached, would be only the testimony of eight men in opposition to the testimony of two thousand in the case of Arius, and of three hundred and fifty in the case of Pelagius.

It is amusing, however, to observe the confidence with which the reviewer relies on testimony which he has himself first totally invalidated. He says (p. 16), "All who are acquainted with this subject (the testimony of the primitive church) know it to be embarrassed by difficulties which make it unwise to place much dependence on arguments derived from thence;" and, "We doubt whether any disputed point was ever satisfactorily settled by an appeal to antiquity." And yet, relying on this very testimony, he says, "We do maintain, and mean to *prove*, that the primitive church was

decidedly anti-Calvinistic:" that is, he means to settle a point by evidence which never yet did settle any point, and which, by all who understand it, is regarded as unworthy of much confidence. Again: "Many Unitarians, either from not possessing sufficient information, or feeling sufficient interest on the subject, seem half inclined tacitly to admit the claim of the Orthodox, that the unanimous voice of the primitive church is in their favor:" that is, other Unitarians, beside himself, have thought that there is no evidence to prove the anti-Calvinism of the primitive church, upon which any who understand it will place much reliance.

Once more: "We are far from pretending that no passages can be produced from the early fathers irreconcilable with our principles; for we are far from believing that these men can always be reconciled with the Scriptures, or with one another, or even with themselves:" that is, these witnesses, whose testimony is to prove the decided anti-Calvinism of the primitive church, have testified, it seems, on the Calvinistic side, also, — have said things irreconcilable with Unitarian principles. Now, where the evidence against us lies, from witnesses who testify on both sides, we do not exactly see, unless it be that on this account a strong presumption arises that they must have been Unitarians. "They cannot always be reconciled with the Scriptures." But the Scriptures, I hope, will be allowed to contain the faith delivered to the saints, though some of the primitive fathers should have taught for doctrines the commandments of men. But, "they cannot be reconciled with one another." Now, in olden time it was thought to be necessary that witnesses should agree in their testimony. But these witnesses of the reviewer, if we are to believe him, come into court contradicting the Bible and one another, and yet prove the decided anti-Calvinism of the primitive church.

Finally, they contradict themselves. That is, as the Calvinistic and anti-Calvinistic systems are opposites, and there is no medium, they taught Calvinism sometimes, and sometimes anti-Calvinism. But no matter; their Calvinistic testimony is just good for nothing, and their anti-Calvinistic testimony proves, decidedly, the anti-Calvinism of the entire primitive church. If the reviewer does, in reality, believe that the testimony of the early fathers proves the decided anti-Calvinism of the primitive church, he is a man of the strangest humor that I have ever known; for he has treated the fathers exactly as he has treated me,—claimed them as anti-Calvinists, and abused them as if he had believed them to be Calvinists,— claimed them as his own witnesses, and treated them just as if he feared their testimony, and had made his calculation chiefly on breaking its force.

I hope it will be perceived that these fathers are not my witnesses, and that destroying their credibility does not affect at all the credibility of those on whose testimony I rely. My argument stands on the ground that the implied testimony of two thousand men to a matter of fact of which they could not be ignorant, and to which they could not testify falsely, without violating all the known laws of the human mind, and destroying totally the credibility of human testimony, is to be regarded as decisive evidence that the primitive church was not anti-Calvinistic, and was, at least in the sense which I have explained, evangelical.

I shall not myself enter the field of direct historical evidence; not because I fear the result, but because it does not suit the nature of my argument. All which it is incumbent on me to do is to examine the evidence employed to set aside my argument, on which the reviewer places *so much and so little* reliance, in order to ascertain, if possible, in which of

his opinions on the subject it becomes him and the public to rest.

To prove the decided anti-Calvinism of the whole primitive church by quotations from the early fathers, the following things are necessary.

1. Their testimony must contradict, at least, some one doctrine which belongs to the system as understood by all Calvinists.

2. It must contradict such and so many doctrines of Calvinism as to amount to its subversion. A man may deny some one or two doctrines which belong to the system, and yet, receiving all the rest, may be substantially a Calvinist.

3. The testimony of the fathers must contradict, not merely such statements of Calvinistic doctrines as are made by some Calvinists, but they must contradict the generic principles of the system, in which all the diversities of Calvinists, as opposed to Unitarians, or Arminians, are agreed.

4. There must be so many who testify against all the leading doctrines of Calvinism, and placed in such circumstances as to time, and relation to each other and to the whole church, as to create moral evidence that their opinions were the opinions of the primitive church. Nothing is more common than for individuals to fall into some peculiarities of their own. Now, the testimony of the fathers must be so circumstanced as clearly to show that it is the received opinion of the whole church, and not merely individual opinion.

5. The language of the witnesses must be such as cannot be reconciled with the elementary principles of the Calvinistic

system just as naturally and easily as with the anti-Calvinistic.

6. To prove by the fathers the anti-Calvinism of the whole primitive church, the language of the fathers must be interpreted with reference to the existing controversies. It is not enough that they used terms which were adopted in after ages, by Pelagius and Arminius, to sanction ideas which the fathers never held. Does not the reviewer know that the early fathers asserted the doctrine of free will only in opposition to the doctrine of fate, as taught by the Stoics,— of material depravity, as taught by the Gnostics,— and of mental depravity, as consisting in good and evil compounded in the essence of the soul at its formation, as taught by the Manicheans? When Justin Martyr, therefore, insists that "man has power by free will;" and Irenæus, "that God has preserved to man a will free and in his own power, not only in works, but also in faith;" and Tatian, "that angels and men are endowed with power over themselves;" and Origen, "that not a single one is formed wicked by the Creator of all things;" and Eusebius, "that the origin and foundation of wickedness is in man, not from any extraneous necessity, but from free will and judgment; that everything is good which is according to nature," because "what is wrong takes place, not according to nature, but contrary to nature, it being the work of choice, not of nature;" and Hilary, "that our will ought to have the property that it exert itself;" and Theodore of Mopsuestia, that it is heresy to hold "that men sin by nature, not by choice;" they are all to be understood as declaring the FREE AGENCY and ACCOUNTABILITY of man, in opposition to the doctrine of fate as taught by the Stoics, and to the doctrine of a material depravity as taught by the Gnostics, and of a mental depravity considered as a part of

the created nature of the soul, as taught by the Manicheans. They meant by free will a will free in opposition to coercion, and a will free in its exercises, in opposition to sin consisting *in a material nature*, or *in a created mind, which is involuntary and sinful in its essence, by an unavoidable necessity.*

Is the reviewer unacquainted with the fact, that the doctrine of free will which was taught by Pelagius agrees in *sound* only with the doctrine of free will as it was taught by the fathers? Pelagius asserted not merely the natural freedom of the will, in opposition to fate, and a material or created depravity, which is all that the fathers deny,— but he taught a moral freedom of the will synonymous with impartiality or unbiased integrity. Pelagius denied that, in consequence of the Fall, it came to pass that all men sin voluntarily, as soon as they act accountably; and asserted that the will is free from any bias to depraved volition in consequence of the sin of Adam; and that men, without the influence of special grace, may, and do, prepare themselves for heaven. In opposition to this unbiased state of will, Augustine and Calvin, and all the Reformers, taught the bondage, or moral impotence, of the will. They denied, with the fathers, the doctrine of fate, and of communicated material or concreated mental depravity. But they asserted what the fathers never denied, because in their day it was not made a subject of controversy, that, though man is a free agent, in possession of all the faculties requisite to accountability, he is, nevertheless, in consequence of the Fall, a free agent always biased to evil, and never to good, but by the special agency of God. Augustine, Calvin, and the Reformers, do not deny the free will which the fathers contended for; and the fathers do not deny the bondage and impotency of the will in the sense in which

Augustine and the Reformers contended for it. On the contrary, when Pelagius, under cover of the language of the fathers, brought up the doctrine of free will, meaning by it to deny the original and entire depravity of man, and the consequent necessity of regeneration by the special influence of the Spirit, the whole church on earth flowed together, to testify that no such doctrine had ever been held by the church. If, therefore, the language of the fathers was apparently in opposition to the technical language of modern Calvinism, it is language which was used loosely, and in reference to other controversies, and long before the points at issue between Pelagius and Augustine had been started; and is not to set aside the language of deliberate precision, adopted by the whole church, the first time that heretical opinions created a necessity for careful and definite language.

My position, then, is, that the fathers never did assert *free will* in the sense in which Pelagius asserted it; and that Augustine, and the Reformers, and Calvinists, never have denied free will in the sense in which the fathers contended for it.

It is in vain to declaim about councils as they existed afterwards, when doctrines were settled by a casting vote, and the faith of a nation changed in a day, with the faith of the court. Such was not the state of things in the council of Nice; and if there were feuds and puerile contentions among the ecclesiastics, this fact only corroborates the evidence of their united suffrage concerning the Divinity of Christ, as a matter of such universal notoriety, that no minor difference could affect their decision on that point. The condemnation of Pelagius was produced, the reviewer says, by the talents, intrigues, and emissaries, of one man, Augustine. He, "when the east had declared for Pelagius, when Rome was temporizing, when

the voice of all antiquity was decidedly against him in many of his dogmas, and unanimously in some of them," was able to overcome all opposition,—to "impose on the Christian world a system of doctrines that have retained, to a considerable degree, though under different modifications, their ascendency to this day." A statement so certainly erroneous in some respects, and so utterly improbable in all, requires some proof in addition to the anonymous assertion of the reviewer.

Equally in vain is it to attempt to break the force of this argument by loose declamation concerning the fathers. It may be admitted that they did not teach the Calvinistic system with the technical accuracy of Augustine or Calvin, or of writers of the present day. All sciences are stated imperfectly in the beginning, and progress in amplitude and accuracy, as time and study, and especially as controversy, induce precision. The early fathers were educated in a false philosophy, which, doubtless, modified, in some degree, their statements of Christian duties and doctrine, and modified them for the worse, to be corrected by after generations, who should expound the Gospel, free from the local temptations of the fathers. They were not all of them men of talents; and were all of them comparative novices in theology, and the art of correct exposition. That, in these circumstances, they should have taught Christianity with great clearness and accuracy, or universal consistency, is not to be expected. The darkness of the world before the Sun of Righteousness arose is affectingly illustrated by Cicero, in his treatise "De Natura Deorum," in which he himself, and all the philosophers, have the appearance of children, attempting in vain to ascertain what there is above the skies. Before the true light shined, men could not see, by reason of the gross darkness; and, after it came, could not see for a time, by reason of its excessive

brightness. But, though men in the circumstances of the fathers may talk loosely, it is not difficult to ascertain their real meaning, provided we understand their education, their philosophy, and the controversies in which they were engaged. All these circumstances, instead of shedding darkness, as the reviewer supposes, are so many lamps shedding light on their page,— so many sentinels clad in ancient armor, standing on the same spot through ages, to guard their real meaning from perversion, and to direct the translator to the true import.

All which I have claimed, or which my argument requires, is that the primitive church was not anti-Calvinistic, but did embrace, substantially, the elementary principles of that Calvinism which I have defined and described as the faith delivered to the saints; such as the natural ability, free agency, and accountability of man; — his entire voluntary depravity, as a consequence, in some way, of the sin of Adam; — the necessity of regeneration by the instrumentality of truth, and by the special influences of the Holy Spirit; — the doctrines of the atonement, of justification by faith, and of rewards and punishments according to our deeds. However loosely the fathers may have spoken, or even inconsistently, on these doctrines; when, at length, they were denied by Pelagius, a universal sensation was produced, and the whole church, in circumstances which for the first time demanded precision, did most precisely and unequivocally condemn the doctrines of Arius and Pelagius, and establish those which I have denominated evangelical. Dr. Beecher is not required, therefore, to accept the challenge of "producing a single respectable authority to bear him out in his assertions, if he means, by the doctrines he has named, those doctrines as they are held by Calvinists." Dr. Beecher has not asserted that the Calvinistic system was taught technically by the early

fathers, as it has been taught since controversy has reduced it to precision and form. Nor has he claimed that the doctrines which he has named were held by the primitive church in any sense but that which he has himself defined and explained. That in this sense they were held by the primitive church, the reviewer concedes, by calling them, and the doctrines of the primitive church, decidedly anti-Calvinistic. And no one can read attentively the testimony of the reviewer's own witnesses, and not perceive a striking coincidence, on most points, between their doctrine and mine.

The testimony of Calvin, that they taught theology with ambiguities and variations, is no more than I have conceded, and is surely no evidence of decided anti-Calvinism; and the declaration of Jansenius, that "Augustine was the first who taught Christians the meaning of the New Testament," only confirms what I have stated,—that they did not speak in a clear, methodical, and consistent manner.

The learned Simon, also, confirms the views which I have given of the fathers. All antiquity, he says, which had opposed itself strongly to the Gnostics and Manicheans, who destroyed the liberty of man, seemed to speak in favor of Pelagius and his followers. If they had not run into the opposite extreme, absolutely denying the necessity of internal grace, they might have boasted of having tradition on their side; that is, if Pelagius had asserted only the natural freedom and ability of the will, such as constitute free agency and accountability, he would have had the fathers on his side; but, in asserting the *moral ability* of the will, as wholly unbiased towards evil, and denying the necessity of regeneration by internal grace, he went in opposition to the testimony of antiquity.

Beausobre also explains the matter, to some extent, as I

have done. He says that the fathers believed, and maintained against the Manicheans, that whatever state man is in, he has the command over his own actions. That Augustine taught the same till he came to dispute with Pelagius, when he changed sides, and, as he thinks, denied the kind of freedom which he had before defended: that is, Augustine contended for the natural liberty and ability of the will against the Gnostics and Manicheans, and against Pelagius he contended for the *moral inability* of the will by reason of sin; and this, with Beausobre, is changing his former opinion. But Beausobre is not the only man who has been unable to perceive any difference between a natural involuntary depravity, and one which consists wholly in the perverse voluntary exercises of a being who is a free agent, and a proper subject of moral government. AUGUSTINE DID NOT CHANGE HIS OPINIONS. The meaning of the term "free will" changed, in his controversy with Pelagius; so that he now denies, in one sense, the "free will" which he had contended for, and still admitted, in another sense.

NO. V.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN EXAMINER.

The eleventh and last evasion respects the moral tendency of the two systems; that is, their actual efficacy in producing a pure and strict morality. My argument is, that the faith delivered to the saints produced a morality of peculiar purity and strictness; that the evangelical system produces a morality of similar purity and strictness, surpassing the morality produced by the liberal system; and that, therefore, the

evangelical system is the faith delivered to the saints, and the liberal system is not.

To this the reviewer replies, that "Unitarians have always felt and expressed a reluctance to enter upon this discussion."

1. Because of its liability to lead "to uncandid and unchristian remarks."

2. Because "it is less likely than any other to advance the interests of truth."

3. "Its only probable effect upon the adverse party is to exasperate their feelings, and rivet their prejudices; or, at best, to inflict on them a deep sense of intentional injury."

4. "Its only influence on the party whom it favors is to confirm them still more in the vicious habit of trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others."

5. "When, however, they have been dared to it and provoked to it by their adversaries, and it has become necessary, in justice to their own characters, and in justice to that cause which they believe to be the cause of truth and the cause of God, to enter into this comparison, they never have yet, and they never will shrink from the trial."

I am persuaded the reviewer has not spoken even with his "usual accuracy," in saying that Unitarians have always felt and expressed a reluctance to enter upon this subject; and that his brethren will by no means thank him for such a concession. Have not Unitarians insisted upon the unworthy and even blasphemous conceptions of the divine character and conduct which are entertained by the Orthodox; — that our doctrines are irrational, absurd, contradictory; and, in their tendency, melancholy, and morose, and austere, and severe; — that they paralyze effort, produce spiritual pride, and encourage men to calculate upon impunity in sin? And is it not a

standing argument in favor of the Unitarian system, that it dispels all these Calvinistic clouds which have been gathered about the character of the Deity, and brings out the glorious sun in all his loveliness, to smile on and to cheer the earth, and to quicken spiritual vegetation?

If Unitarians have not insisted and do not insist on the superior moral efficacy of their system, they have thrown out a multitude of words very incautiously, and kept the world very much in ignorance of their views, to this day. If all they have meant to say has been only to assert the superior theoretical adaptation of their doctrines to produce a pure and strict morality, as the reviewer has asserted concerning their untried efficacy to produce revivals and missionary effort, then no wonder that they have always felt and expressed a reluctance to agitate the question of the actual comparative efficacy of the two systems in producing a pure and strict morality. But if they have intended to claim, and do, in reality, believe, that their views of doctrine do produce, in fact, the purest and strictest morality, they are the strangest logicians I have ever met with, or read of,—to be reluctant to approach the strongest ground of argument which men can possibly possess. And yet, this impregnable fortress, whose first fire, if they have got the munition of moral effects on their side, would silence Orthodoxy forever, they approach, the reviewer says, "reluctantly;" and only to save their honor, and show their courage, when they are pricked and pushed up to it by Orthodox bayonets. Doubtless, the reviewer is mistaken in respect to his brethren; for why should Unitarians be reluctant to investigate the moral effect of the two systems? Are they not candid, sincere, and in earnest, in their search after truth? Is not practical tendency the universal mode of common-sense judging on all subjects? Do

farmers buy for use patents on account of their theoretical excellence?—and should two machines be offered to the public for the same use, and one should court, and the other always deprecate, a reference to experiment, which would the farmers buy? I would ask whether practical effect is not the rule of trial which the Bible has instituted; and whether Unitarians do not know this, and resort to it? When the Orthodox speak of the importance of doctrine, do they not hear, in reply, about metaphysical subtleties and speculative opinions of no practical utility? And are they not told, with exultation, "By their fruits shall ye know them;"—that it is not what men *think*, but what they *do*, which decides their character; and that we shall not be judged by our creeds, but by our deeds?

When we appeal to revivals of religion as evidence of the truth of our doctrines, we are told about "certain feelings," which it is as easy to get up in "town-meetings" as in conference-meetings; and are warned against enthusiasm, and referred to the unfailing test of good works. "By their fruits shall ye know them." It is too late in the day for Unitarians to shrink from this test of divine appointment, and of their own choosing. And as to those effects which make the reviewer deprecate the comparison, they are only the effects which the preaching of the Gospel produced on those who rejected it. It exasperated those who rejected it; and it divided families, and kindled a fire in the world, which has not gone out to this day. And as to spiritual pride, and the "vicious habit of trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others," it is the charge which the virtuous heathen flung indignantly back upon Christians, for presuming to think themselves so much better than others, that none could be saved but in their way. And yet, as the

Saviour directed the Gospel to be preached with all these effects in view, it may be safe for us to examine the effect of the two systems, even though the same results should follow which followed the preaching of the Gospel.

It will serve, at the same time, to relieve us from the solicitude of possible mistake, could we ascertain on which side the complaining is heard, and the sense of "intentional injury" created. I do not pretend to universal knowledge on this subject; but, so far as my information extends, I have heard no complaint from the Orthodox concerning this test of truth. The treatise of Andrew Fuller on the subject has been, with the Orthodox in England and in America, one of the most popular argumentative works which has ever been written. And the sermon entitled "The Faith once delivered to the Saints," which was not borrowed from Fuller, though it treats on the same subject, has been regarded by the Orthodox with higher and more universal approbation than the author had any right to expect. In the mortal affray of battle, we always conclude that the most wounds are received where there is the most outcry; and that they who are first to denounce a particular mode of warfare are they who have received most harm from it. Indeed, the reviewer seems plainly to intimate that the balance of gain from the argument is on our side, and the "sense of intentional injury" on the side of Unitarians; for, not to refer to the reluctance with which he comes to the comparison of moral effects, he has these remarkable words, which, as heretofore used by Unitarians, seem to characterize none but the Orthodox: "While its only influence on the party whom it favors is to confirm them still more in the vicious habit of trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others." Now, we are not at liberty to suppose that the reviewer meant

to charge on Unitarians this "vicious habit of trusting in themselves, and despising others," however just the charge might have been, in respect to the invectives which they cast upon the Orthodox technicalities. It is fairly to be claimed, therefore, that the Orthodox were intended in this passage; and yet we can hardly credit our eyes, when we read the implied concession, that the Orthodox are the party whom the discussion of the moral influence of the two systems favors, and favors to such an extent as to make Unitarians unwilling to resort to it; and for this, among other reasons — lest the Orthodox should injure themselves by the increase of their "vicious habit of trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others."

I have no objection to the statement of the question by the editor of the Baltimore Miscellany; "not which party is perfect, but which is most defective, in consequence of its faith;" though I cannot subscribe to his insinuation, that "the party whose morality is the most pure and strict" is to be regarded as "pointing at, and denouncing, and condemning all the rest." I have yet to learn that a candid statement of facts cannot be made without invidious intent; or that a man can by no means perceive that his morality is more strict than that of his neighbor, without denouncing his neighbor, and setting up himself as a vain-glorious boaster. In the attempt to ascertain the comparative strictness of the morality produced by the evangelical and the liberal system, I waived the comparison of individual character, and looked, for their relative tendency, "to communities where the two systems have been most unmingled and of the longest duration," and to those "obvious changes which may have appeared, as one or the other system has prevailed." As evidence in favor of the superior strictness of evangelical morality, I quoted a

concession from the British Encyclopedia, written, as it is said, by an infidel, and the concessions of Dr. Priestley, and of the Edinburgh Review, which give the preference in point of strictness decidedly to evangelical morality. Of these facts, notorious by concession, the reviewer takes no notice,—does not deny them, and makes no attempt to reconcile them with the supposition that the liberal system is the faith delivered to the saints.

Now, when natural philosophers differ in theory, and facts are adduced by one in confirmation of his opinions, an obligation is supposed to be laid on the other to account for these facts in accordance with his theory; and the philosopher who makes no reply to matters of fact, and makes no attempt to account for them upon his own system, is supposed to be vanquished, and to be conscious that he is vanquished. The rule is certainly fair in natural science, and why it should not be applied to moral subjects is more than I can perceive. It is a hopeless case to adduce facts in evidence, if all an opponent has to do is to pass them over in silence, or to make a diversion to draw away the attention of the unwary. I call on the reviewer as a philosopher, as a professing Christian, and as a professed minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, to take notice of the facts which I have adduced to prove the superior strictness of the morality produced in communities by evangelical doctrines to that produced by the liberal system. Instead of doing this, he evades my argument by replying to it as if I had attempted to compare *Unitarian nations with Evangelical nations*, and says, "Unfortunately, Unitarianism has never yet *prevailed* in any country, and therefore the comparison cannot be made." But I have made no such comparison of nations of Unitarians and of Calvinists. It is communities — bodies of men among whom

the two systems have *most* prevailed, or where one or the other has prevailed alternately — that I speak; and, by "prevail," I do not mean prevail exclusively, but where they exist and exert their moral power on masses of men sufficiently large to disclose, in their effects, their relative moral tendencies. And is there no possibility of finding enough of Unitarianism on the globe, in any period of time, to furnish an opportunity of comparing its effects on society with the effects of Orthodoxy? Truly, the witnesses must have prophesied in sackcloth more than twelve hundred years, if this be so, and Unitarianism is the faith delivered to the saints.

But why does the reviewer evade facts of universal notoriety? Is not the anti-Calvinistic system the faith of Unitarians, so far as opposition to Calvinism is concerned? And has there been no prevalence of the Calvinistic and anti-Calvinistic systems, even in *nations*, sufficient to discover their comparative moral tendencies? Are all the energies of Unitarian anti-Calvinism a matter of theoretical tendency to this day? Has it prevailed so little, and done so little, that no one can decide upon its moral tendencies, compared with Calvinism?

We are favored, however, at last, with two or three facts. First, "that in *almost* every instance in which an uncommon looseness of principle and profligacy of morals have come in upon a nation (as in the reign of Charles II. in England), it has plainly been owing to the reäction occasioned in the public mind by the previous ascendency of high Calvinism." But does not the reviewer know that two thousand evangelical ministers were ejected by Charles II. in one day, — nearly all the evangelical ministers who belonged to the Church of England, — and that all their places were left vacant, or supplied

by anti-Calvinists? And is it not a singular mode of disproving the superior moral tendency of Calvinism, to quote a fact which shows that while Calvinistic ministers remained in the church the morality was so strict, that when they were turned out, the wicked clapped their hands and held a jubilee, followed by the most profligate state of morals that England ever saw? If we were contending whether the strictness of Calvinistic morality did not occasion such reäction, the fact might be relevant, though the argument would lie equally against the Gospel. But my argument turns on the simple fact,—which system actually produces the strictest morality. I did not doubt that, on this subject, the reviewer would be sorely "hit by the archers;" but I did not expect that, like Saul upon Gilboa, he would be driven to desperation, and fall upon the point of his own sword.

But it is the reviewer's own statement, that when Calvinistic ministers were turned out of the English church, and anti-Calvinists came in, an unparalleled scene of licentiousness and irreligion ensued. I do not propose to volunteer in adducing much additional proof at this time. I would simply call the attention of the reviewer to the following facts, and ask him to account for them:

1. That the morality of Scotland, where evangelical ministers continued in the church, should remain comparatively unaffected, while so great a declension in morals took place in England immediately after the evangelical ministers were driven out.

2. How it should come to pass that the evangelical dissenters from the Church of England should, as a body, have been persons of a stricter morality than the members of the established church.

3. How it should happen that the two thousand evangeli-

cal ministers in the established church, and the people who attend their ministrations, should be confessedly the most sober and strict part of the English church.

4. Dignitaries of the Church of England have declared that the decline of evangelical preaching in the church has been followed by the decline of religion, and the increase of infidelity.

Again, the reviewer says, "It is not a little difficult to reconcile with Dr. Beecher's conclusions" (as if I had merely reasoned, without appealing to matters of fact) "that in our own country, where alone Unitarianism has had a chance of prevailing, it has prevailed most in that section of it most remarkable for the principles, habits, and institutions, which distinguish a moral and religious community."

I did not forbear a more local comparison of the moral tendency of the two systems because I did not perceive materials nearer home as much to my purpose as those I selected; nor because I was afraid to push the comparison to the very heart of the enemy's camp. I supposed, however, that, for once, enough had been said; and that a voluntary analysis of the subject in Boston and its vicinity might, as the reviewer says, have the effect on the adverse party "to exasperate feeling and rivet prejudices, and inflict a deep sense of intentional injury;" and as much as the reviewer deprecates an appeal to moral tendencies, I did not doubt but the first reply to this argument would summon me to Boston in self-defence. I have received the summons, and have come; and shall defend my argument unsparingly, with such materials as the theatre of comparison selected by the reviewer may afford,—"the only region where Unitarianism has had a chance of prevailing."

I would ask the reviewer, then, whether it is enough for

his argument, simply in five lines to allude to the Unitarian part of Massachusetts as remarkable for the principles, and habits, and institutions, which distinguish a moral and religious community? Would it not have been as well to prove that all these good things did not exist before Unitarianism existed, when Orthodoxy was universal; or that morality and religion had materially improved in proportion as Orthodoxy had declined, and Unitarianism prevailed? Orthodoxy had prevailed in that region for two hundred years; and Unitarianism had been gradually increasing, reinforced by old Arminianism, for sixty or seventy years, though it is but about twenty years since it has been generally avowed, and openly preached.

Now, as moral causes operate slowly on communities, and habits hold on their course long after the causes which formed them have ceased, I am quite disposed to claim, as the effects of Orthodoxy, those habits and institutions of Boston and the region round about; and to deny that Unitarianism, half concealed and half preached for fifteen or twenty years, has produced the moral habits which distinguish the capital of Massachusetts. The present state of things in the Unitarian part of Massachusetts may be accounted for, if Orthodoxy is what my argument claims, powerful in its purifying influence, and Unitarianism relaxing in its moral tendencies. This morality may be the effect of Orthodoxy operating for two hundred years, and may remain in spite of the deleterious tendency of a partial Unitarianism, counteracted by the powerful energy of existing as well as of past Orthodoxy.

From another quarter, however, I am summoned to Boston, in tones of imperious earnestness. In my sermon I have said that the "irreligious, immoral, and profligate part of the community prefer the liberal system, and are vehemently

opposed to the evangelical;" and Dr. Miller, in his ordination sermon at Baltimore, says, "that all over the world, the gay, the fashionable, the worldly-minded, and even the licentious, prefer those preachers who deny the Divinity and atonement of the Saviour, and who reject the doctrines of human depravity, of regeneration, and of justification by the righteousness of Christ." His statement and mine are substantially the same. But this statement of Dr. Miller the editor of the Baltimore Miscellany considers as *charging the whole body of Unitarians, all over the world, with irreligion and immorality; as impeaching the morals of the whole body of Unitarians; as affixing a stigma, and passing a sentence of reprobation*, UPON THE WHOLE SECT. And, in this view of the matter, he says to Dr. Miller, "Let me call your attention particularly to that part of the country where Unitarian principles have been long prevalent, and where they are embraced by a very large part of the community. Are you prepared to charge the people of *Boston and its vicinity* with a higher degree of immorality and depravity of manners than is found in other cities? Are you prepared to say that the churches in that place are, more than in any other, filled with 'the gay, the fashionable, the worldly-minded, and the licentious'? In Boston, if anywhere, may be found a proof of your assertions, because in that place the Unitarians probably make the most numerous class of society. But dare you come before the public with any attempt to exhibit such proof? You dare not. You dare not assail the moral character of a great number of the leading and most respectable members of society."

Since the publication of my sermon, these letters of the editor to Dr. Miller have been revised and published, as containing whatever may be needful on the subject of the moral

tendency of the Orthodox and the Unitarian systems: of course, all the preceding charges and challenges are as much levelled at me as at Dr. Miller. I shall therefore bestow a few remarks upon them, before I proceed. I would observe, then, that the editor puts a false construction on Dr. Miller's language, and, of course, on mine. We do not say that Unitarians, as a body, are irreligious, voluptuous, or vicious. Such characters exist in all communities; and what we say is, that everywhere, "all over the world," such characters prefer the Unitarian doctrines to evangelical doctrines; which, considering that the Bible says the righteous love the truth, and the wicked hate it, is no very good sign that Unitarian doctrines are *the truth*. We, then, have made no charges of irreligion, immorality, or voluptuousness, upon Unitarians as a body. If I were to say that certain plays are of a loose and immoral tendency, and should adduce, in proof of my assertion, the fact that they were most applauded, all over the world, by the profligate part of the audience who attend theatres, should I be understood to charge all who attend theatres with profligacy? I would remind the editor that persecution, like fame, is very useful to a religious sect when it comes unsought, but wholly unavailing when courted; and that it would have been much more to his purpose to have disproved the facts which Dr. Miller and myself stated, than to pervert their import, and lash himself into a foam at his own misrepresentations.

I must add, that it is childish and ridiculous to pretend that "the leading, and influential, and respectable members" of any religious community are personally and invidiously implicated and insulted, by an attempt to ascertain by facts the relative moral tendency *on communities* of the systems of religion under whose influence they live. No two religious

systems are alike in their moral influence, and no system of religion is so exclusively pernicious in its influence as to corrupt and debase *all* who live under its moral power. There are among pagans, Mahometans, papists, and all the Protestant denominations of Christians, some "leading and respectable men," and such as *some* Unitarians think will undoubtedly find their way to heaven. But, if this were true, that some respectable men of all religions will be saved, are all religions equally efficacious and salutary in producing a strict morality on that *miscellaneous mass of mankind* which is embodied in civil and religious communities? The Gospel produces the best morality on the mass of human society, however constituted in respect to forms of government; and if evangelical doctrines produce the same effect which the Gospel did on the complex mass of human minds, and the liberal doctrines are invariably attended by a more lax morality, all our principles of reasoning from cause to effect are useless, if the evangelical system is not the Gospel. Nor is this comparison instituted and pressed upon the attention of the inhabitants of Boston from any insensibility to the excellent institutions and excellent characters which adorn the metropolis of Massachusetts; much less to encourage the "vicious habit of trusting in ourselves that we are righteous, and despising others."

By the consent of all, our Puritan fathers have reared the noblest institutions which have ever blest this miserable world. Their wisdom and efficacy are becoming more apparent every day, and are the foundation of that hope which now beams on the world, of the elevation of the family of man to intelligence, and liberty, and holiness. Religion, of all moral causes, has, in all periods of time, been the most powerful in modifying the condition of men; and no institutions under

heaven ever rose and operated more exclusively under the influence of religion, as the great central power, than the institutions of our forefathers. They came here on purpose to try what the religion of the Bible, as they understood it, would do, unshackled by the ecclesiastical despotism of Europe. The result of this experiment this whole nation feels, in her present prosperity, and in her joyful anticipations. The whole creation feels it, which has groaned and travailed together in pain until now, and begins to rejoice at length in the prospect of coming into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; while all who have held the world in chains, and rioted on the misery of man, are filled with great wrath, because they know that their time is short.

Now, we know, in all its details, the practical course in which this most blessed experiment, the world's last hope, has been conducted. Should, then, a set of religious innovators arise, with pretensions to superior wisdom, who should propose to take from our great system the central spring which, from the beginning to this day, had produced its auspicious movement, for the purpose of substituting one of much greater theoretical excellence, the whole land and the whole world would say, let the new spring be tried first;—and as it is in the full tide of recent experiment in Boston and its vicinity, let philosophers watch the results, with as much eagerness, at least, as they would watch the transit of Venus, and record the results with as much accuracy. There may be in Boston, for aught I can tell, some few who have so far given themselves up to the dominion of religious party spirit as to be past the power of moral influence, either by argument or by facts. But, in my judgment, it is a libel upon the intelligence, and liberality, and conscientious honesty, of "the leading, influential, respectable members of society" in Boston

and its vicinity, to say that they would feel themselves implicated, by a comparison of the moral tendencies of the evangelical and the liberal system upon the complex community of Boston and its vicinity.

That my justification may be seen at once, I must add what was said on the same subject in my sermon.

"The illustration of the argument from effects must consist of many particulars, and of matters of fact. The argument, therefore, can only be stated concisely, without attempting to answer every possible objection. The facts, too, may be regarded by some as invidious. I have only to say, that no fact will be stated, as such, which is not believed to be notoriously true, and, if denied, capable of unequivocal proof; and as to the invidious bearing of matters of fact, or of arguments, I am persuaded it is both a false delicacy and an unsound cause which would shrink from this test, and shield itself under forms of alleged decorum. But I must be allowed to believe, also, that no real decorum is violated by the statement of facts, or the pressure of arguments, where the object is important, the design honest, and the manner sober and respectful. Systems of religion, as well as of natural philosophy, may be brought to the test of actual experiment. 'By their fruits shall ye know them.' But, if the moral world were, by the laws of decorum, closed against us, and we might only theorize without it upon practical tendencies, and not enter it to collect and appeal to facts, we might contend earnestly, but certainly should contend to very little purpose. To the word and testimony of God, and to matters of fact, we appeal."

I proceed, then, to inquire whether any changes have taken place, in Boston and its vicinity, indicating a decline of moral sensibility and moral strictness in the community, since Orthodoxy has declined, and Unitarianism has prevailed. And, if any of my allusions or remarks shall give pain, I beg that the deed should be characterized only by the occasion and the motive. Dr. Priestley has said,—"I could overlook everything in a man who, I thought, meant nothing but my eternal welfare." If this is not *my motive*, and if I am

actuated by any other, my heart has greatly deceived me. The reviewer and the editor will, therefore, I trust, fortify themselves both with meekness and with charity, while I proceed to the inquiry, whether, even in Boston and its vicinity, there are not some changes which have happened considerably for the worse, since Orthodoxy left the helm, and Unitarianism took it. I shall advert chiefly to those views, feelings, and habits, of our fathers, which, unquestionably, have had the chief influence, as moral causes, in producing on the community the moral results of their system.

The first topic which I shall introduce is that of *family religion, including the daily worship of God morning and evening, and the religious instruction and government of children.* It will not be denied that the moral causes which form the character and influence the conduct of men are applied more powerfully in the family than in any other form of our social condition; and that the system of family discipline which makes them best acquainted with the moral government of God is best calculated to produce a strict morality. I would ask, then, In which class of the community is family prayer and the religious instruction of children most practised or neglected,— in the Unitarian or the Orthodox? If this question be too general, I would ask, Among which class of the *public professors of religion* is family prayer most extensively observed, or neglected? It will not be denied, I believe, that the practice of family religion obtains most in the families of Orthodox professors; and, of course, if morality is pure and strict in proportion to the fidelity manifested in the application of the best means in the most favorable circumstances, the morality of Orthodox communities will be more strict and pure than that of Unitarian communities.

The SABBATH has always been regarded as the mainspring of Christianity, the institution designed by Heaven to give practical influence to the laws of the divine moral government. Of course, as the Sabbath is strictly or loosely observed by particular societies of men, the moral influence of the government of God will be more or less apparent in their life and conversation. I would inquire, then, whose views of the proper mode of sanctifying the Sabbath are best calculated to bring home upon the conscience and heart of a community the moral influence of the divine government? It is a universal law in science, that application is indispensable, and that there is no royal road to eminence in literature; and is not the same maxim equally true on the subject of religion and morals? Can men be benefited by the Bible without reading it; or by the Sabbath, but in proportion as it is consecrated to religious purposes? Now, according to the Orthodox fathers of New England, the Sabbath is to be sanctified by a "holy resting, all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the whole time in public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy." It is this mode of sanctifying the Sabbath which has lent its influence to the illustrious religious and moral results which are witnessed in New England; all of which do fade and vanish away, in proportion as this mode of keeping the holy day is supplanted by any other. Who, then, regard this primitive mode of sanctifying the Sabbath with the most reverence, and who pay to it the most practical homage, the Unitarians or the Orthodox? The Orthodox, no doubt, have declined greatly from the strictness of the fathers; but have not Unitarians declined still more? Do they, as a body, keep the Sabbath as strictly as the Ortho-

dox? and if this be too indefinite, I will vary the question: Do they keep the Sabbath in a manner as well calculated *to make themselves and their children acquainted with the revealed will of God, and to bring upon their hearts a sense of accountability, and the moral influence of rewards and punishments, as the Orthodox?* Is it considered allowable to make social family visits on the Sabbath, by the Orthodox, as extensively as it is by Unitarian families? Has the personal and official influence of the Unitarian part of the community been exerted as much in favor of executing the laws which protect the Sabbath from profanation, as that of the Orthodox part of the community? I do not ask whether some Unitarians may not maintain correct views and exemplary strictness on this subject; or insinuate that some Orthodox families may not be shamefully lax, both in opinion and practice. It is bodies of men so large as to form a distinctive character on this point that my interrogations respect.

The *theatre* has never, I believe, been esteemed and patronized by those in Christian communities who belong to what are called the stricter sort; and a very general opinion has been entertained by mankind, that the theatre is not favorable to a strict morality. Dr. Witherspoon has furnished me with the following facts and observations.

In Athens, where the theatre had its birth, both tragedy and comedy were soon abolished by public authority. He quotes Aristotle as saying, that though they brought tragedy in Athens to as great perfection as the nature of the thing seems to admit, whoever will infer from this that they improved in their morals in the same proportion, or by that means, will fall into a very gross mistake. In Rome, until the time of Pompey, theatres were not allowed to stand above

a certain number of days. It is certain that the theatrical profession has had a disgrace attached to it, from the earliest times, and in all the countries where theatres have been in use. Public actors on the stage were accounted infamous by the Roman law. Theatrical amusements were condemned by the primitive church; and were interdicted by the church, from the time of the introduction of Christianity, to the expiration of the French monarchy. Seneca speaks of theatres as most pernicious in their moral tendency. Dr. Witherspoon himself says, "How few plays are acted which a modest woman can see, consistently with decency, in every part! There are ladies who frequent the theatre, who, if they were but once entertained with the same images in a private family with which they are presented there, would rise with indignation, and reckon their reputation ruined, if ever they should return." I may safely affirm, that no woman of reputation, who has been ten times in a play-house, dares repeat in company all that she has heard there. Players are almost universally vicious, and of such abandoned character as might justly make those who defend the stage ashamed of learning virtue under such masters. Can men learn piety from the profane, mortification from the sensual, or modesty from harlots? Within two or three years, I have myself seen it declared in one of the newspapers in Boston, that the theatre was in such a condition that no virtuous man could with propriety lead his wife or daughter thither; and in another a protest was entered against some particular play that was getting up, in terms equally severe; and neither of these was an Orthodox paper. I have never myself attended a theatre; but I have been credibly informed, that a part, and no small part, of the audience, in one part of the house, is composed of persons of abandoned character; and that the doors and ave-

nues to the theatre are generally beset by persons of both sexes whose feet, according to the Bible, "go down to death, whose steps take hold on hell."

I would now simply inquire upon whom, in Boston, the theatre relies chiefly for patronage. Who are the families that regard it as an innocent and fashionable amusement; as a means of refining the taste, and as a school of morals? Who are the fathers, and mothers, and sons, and daughters, who attend the theatre? Is it the Orthodox in Boston who chiefly support that institution, or the Unitarian part of the community?

The Scriptures are undoubtedly very strict on the subject of *self-denial;* not merely in respect to gross, palpable immoralities, but in respect to the temper of the heart, and the remote principles of action. There is a course of this world, and a conformity to this world, and a friendship of this world, all of which are injurious to Christian character. And there is such a thing as being crucified to the world, having our conversation in heaven, keeping the heart with all diligence, and avoiding the very appearance of evil; and there can be no doubt that those whose lives accord most nearly with these directions will lead lives of the most pure and strict morality. I would inquire, then, Which part of the community, in Boston and its vicinity, live most in accordance with the spiritual import of these requirements? I shall not leave the question so indefinite. I suppose that card-parties, and late suppers, and "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," are not recognized, in the New Testament, among the means of grace, or the signs of grace, or the specimens of Christian vigilance and self-denial, or as a compliance with the exhortation to avoid the appearance of evil. I would ask, then, Which abound most in such matters (of doubtful pro-

priety, to say the least), Unitarian or Orthodox families? And, as real Christians are declared to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, I would inquire, Who, among professors of religion, make and frequent most those parties of which the card-table forms no inconsiderable portion of the amusement, the Unitarian or the Orthodox professors? and in which course is the church of Christ likely to afford the most light, and to produce in the community the strictest morality?

In respect to family balls among persons of wealth and refinement, though it should be admitted that Job was cynical in his insinuations that they are the pastimes of voluptuousness, the causes of irreligion, and the precursors of sudden destruction, they may at least be carried to excess; and that community in which they are so will not claim, probably, the preëminence in respect to a pure and strict morality. And now, if amusements of this description are carried to excess by any class of the community in Boston, I would ask, By which class is this done, by the Orthodox or by the Unitarians? I have heard of family balls, to celebrate the nuptials of a clergyman, protracted through six or eight evenings, and (as it is said) by the eagerness of family friends to testify in a suitable manner their interest on the occasion; and much against the will of the worthy man, whose politeness obliged him to attend. Was it in an Orthodox society in Boston that this was done? Is there one Orthodox society in that city which would not have been shocked at the idea of balls in honor of the nuptials of their clergyman? Is there one Orthodox society in Boston in which a clergyman could have maintained his standing, after having yielded, in such a manner, to the indiscreet wishes of family friends? I allude to the subject with reluctance, and only because it is a fact

which speaks volumes as to a change of moral and religious feelings, which Orthodoxy certainly did not produce; and which, taken in all its connections, affords no very favorable promise of exerting upon the community at large an influence which shall rival Orthodoxy in the purity and strictness of Christian morality.

The laws of honor and *duelling* have been justly regarded with abhorrence in New England, from the beginning. But I have before me the report of a trial for murder, held in Boston, October 4, 1806, in which the counsel for the prisoner, after attempting his defence on the ground that the killing was done in justifiable self-defence, took his client from this ground, and placed him under the protection of the law of honor, and gave an elaborate defence of it. He recognized the principle that the municipal law is not sufficient to protect the feelings, reputation, and usefulness, of the higher classes in society; that these have a right to judge for themselves, when their feelings, reputation, and usefulness, require them to take their own protection and redress into their own hands. And he said, "Should I ever be driven to that impassable point where degradation and disgrace begin, may this arm shrink palsied from its socket, if I fail to defend my own honor!" and he thinks that, with sincere feelings of piety, a man might raise the pistol, and call on the FATHER OF MERCIES to direct the stroke. To this the attorney-general replied, "We will not take up the glove. Such declarations as are made by the gentleman on the other side would countenance all the duels that have been fought in the world, and render unavailing all the laws that have been enacted for the punishment of illegal and savage combats. Is the measure of a man's conduct, when he leaps the bounds of an established law, to receive a standard from the feelings of his wife and

children, or the notions of honor in the congregation of fashionable men; and can a man appeal to Heaven in this way, and be a pious Christian? When I heard that this doctrine had been advised on this occasion by professional men, I shuddered at it."

On this statement I beg leave to ask, first, Would an attorney of talents and judgment have dared, in the olden times of universal Orthodoxy, to take his client from the protection of the civil law, and place him under the protection of the law of honor? Is the law of honor the law of God, or the law of the land? And yet, in a criminal prosecution in this case, a man of distinguished talents publicly recognized, in a court of justice, and appealed to, the law of honor. Secondly, In the days of universal Orthodoxy, could he have taken this course for his client with the advice of professional men? Thirdly, Could he, in times of predominant Orthodoxy in Boston, have avowed in a court of justice, and before Orthodox judges, the length and breadth of the duelling code, without reprehension from the bench? Are not judges bound to stop counsellors when they assert as law that which, notoriously, is not law? And to what cause shall we ascribe the silence of the court, when such horrid principles were advocated in their presence? Would such a counsellor have dared to do such a thing, half a century earlier? Could such a man have done it, when Orthodox men adorned the seat of justice, without prompt and merited rebuke? And what a fearful change in the moral sensibilities of the community does the existence of such a court, and such an advocate, and such professional advisers, imply! I would inquire whether principles avowed by such high authority, and so publicly avowed, without rebuke, have had no contaminating influence upon the young men in the higher classes of society in Bos-

ton. Is there nothing to lament on this subject, and nothing to fear?

The Lord Jesus Christ has decided that regularly organized churches, composed of real Christians, are favorable to a pure and strict morality among men. They are the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the organized administrators of the influence of the divine moral government. Admitting, therefore, that all, under each system of doctrines, who profess religion, are real Christians, or at least equally entitled to the character, that system of doctrine which produces the most professors of religion must be regarded as producing the most pure and strict morality. What, then, are the comparative facts, on this subject, in the churches in Boston which once were Orthodox and are now Unitarian? We have but one printed document,— the history of a single church; but from this it appears that there has been a decline as to the numbers who openly profess religion, since the church passed from under Orthodox to Unitarian influence. What the result would be, on a comparison of the present with the former records of all the churches in Boston which were once Orthodox but are now Unitarian, I cannot say. But I would ask whether the number of communicants in the Unitarian churches in Boston bears any considerable proportion to the number of communicants in the Orthodox churches; though the terms of admission, it must be admitted, are much more liberal in the former than in the latter. May I be allowed to extend this inquiry to the church in Cambridge college, compared with the churches in Orthodox colleges? I have been credibly informed, within two years, that the actual number of undergraduates who were communicants in the college church did not exceed nine. At the same time, it appeared from documents, that Orthodox colleges, possessing not more

than one-third the number of students at Cambridge, included by two-thirds a greater number of communicants; while those Orthodox colleges which contained nearly an equal number of students, or a small excess, contained nearly ten times the number of communicants in their churches. In respect to the state of religion and morals in Cambridge college, I forbear to ask any questions, as distinguished friends of that institution, who regard the interests of science above the ascendency of a sectarian religion, have said more than I could find it in my heart to repeat.

It only remains that I notice a few things of a miscellaneous nature, before I conclude. I have given my reasons at large (pp. 255—259 of this volume) why the Orthodox, with their views of doctrine, should regard and preach the evangelical system as essential to Christian character and to eternal life. All these explanations the reviewer passes by in silence, while he seeks to raise and direct against me the indignation of the whole body of the Unitarians, for failing to recognize them as Christians. He doubts "whether, in all I have written and said, I have ever yielded to Unitarians as a body the name of Christian." The reviewer should not affect to doubt on this subject; he *knows* that I do not regard *Unitarianism* as Christianity, or Unitarians who UNDERSTAND the evangelical system and reject it, and who understand the liberal system and embrace it, as being Christians.

Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I have never said nor supposed that there are no Christians in Unitarian families, societies, and churches. These in New England are the children of the Pilgrims; some of them are the children of Orthodox, pious parents, and have been baptized in the name of the holy Trinity of heaven. It is comparatively but a little while since, in churches now called Unitarian, they

heard from the voice of their teachers those doctrines which we regard as the words of eternal life; and not a few, as I hope, received the grace of God, and became members of the churches called Unitarian before they were such, and at a time when the open avowal of *Unitarianism*, as it has since been avowed, would have prevented the settlement of any man. Those who have left Unitarian societies compel us to believe that there were Christians belonging to them, and the feelings of some who have not left them convince us that there *are* Christians among Unitarians. Indeed, from what I have been allowed to witness of the power of truth in Boston, it is my opinion that there are many among Unitarians who feel a solemn reverence for God, and his Word and worship, the active power of a tender conscience, and the pressure of an honest and earnest desire to know what is truth; and that, with such, *Unitarianism* consists more in aversion to Calvinism as it has been *misrepresented*, than in any settled opposition to the doctrines of the Evangelical system, when correctly understood; and I have thought that nothing would be easier, could an opportunity be afforded, than the removal of these unfounded prejudices, and the restoration of these children of the Pilgrims to the way of their fathers, and the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

And as to the invidious complaint of our not allowing to Unitarians the name of Christians, it is a complaint so unreasonable and so unjust, that they who make it pay but a poor compliment to the understandings of Unitarians, if they expect it can long avail them to create prejudice, or stop among them the progress of truth. We do no more withhold from Unitarians the Christian character than they do from us. We regard them as rejecting the Gospel, and they regard us as idolaters; and, whatever they may be pleased to say, after

they have in effect stripped us of Christian character, and thrust us out of the pale of the church, and cut us off from heaven, they cannot bring us back again, or cover up our idolatry with the mantle of their charity; for no point is more absolutely settled in the Bible than that IDOLATERS are not Christians, and cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But neither have we any cause to complain of them, nor they of us. Unitarians and the Orthodox are bound by the high command of Heaven to think for themselves,—to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. In this process, we come to conclusions so diverse about the doctrines which constitute Christianity, that if one side is right, the other side is wrong. If Unitarians are right, we are idolaters; and if we are right, Unitarians are not Christians. But, in coming to these conclusions, we have no sinister design respecting each other. We do not become Unitarians or Trinitarians for the *sake* of denying Christian character to each other; and that we do so, follows only as an inference unavoidable from our belief: for, as I have said, it surpasses the power of Unitarians, after they have by their *principles* made us idolaters, to make us Christians by their charity. Nor do we, in judging for ourselves, exercise any right but our own, or encroach upon the right of each other. Unitarians have no claim to our charity, nor we to theirs, unless it can be granted in consistency with our respective convictions of truth. We not only have no claim to the charity of Unitarians, but *they* have no right to grant it to us in direct opposition to the express decision of the Bible,—that idolaters are not Christians, and cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Dr. Priestley, whose candor I admire as much as I deplore his errors, says, "The truth is, there neither can nor ought to be any compromise between us. If *you* are right, *we* are not Christians at all;

and if *we* are right, *you* are gross *idolaters.*" Again, he says, "All who believe Christ to be a man, and not God, must necessarily think it idolatrous to pay him divine honor; and to call it so, is no other than the necessary consequence of our belief." Nay, he represents it as "ridiculous, that they should be allowed to *think* Trinitarians idolaters, without being permitted to call them so;" and adds, "I have no idea of being offended with any man. in things of this kind, for speaking what he believes to be the truth."

As to the charge of thrusting Unitarians out of the pale of the church, it is ridiculous. Have not Unitarians the privilege of forming churches of their own; and have not all denominations the right of judging for themselves what are the qualifications for membership? It is the *essence* of liberty of conscience, that Christians of similar views in doctrine and experience should be allowed to associate for mutual usefulness and edification. It is the exercise of this right which constitutes different denominations of Christians; and if, according to the doctrinal views of the Orthodox, Unitarians cannot be received into fellowship, have they any claim upon us? Let them go to their own company, and be at peace. We do not ask to be admitted to their churches; — why should they demand fellowship in ours? It is more for the peace of the religious community that those who differ radically should separate, than that discordant materials should be pressed together in one community. If Unitarians can hold fellowship with idolaters, the Orthodox cannot hold fellowship with those who, according to their views of truth, reject the Gospel. We have a right to judge for ourselves what is Christianity; and Unitarians have no right to insist that they will judge for themselves and for us too.

The reviewer has charged me with being guilty of a mis-

representation of the opinions of Dr. Priestley; and with being guilty of an artifice and unfairness unequalled by any writer, except, perhaps, Dr. Magee. In reply, I have to say,

1. That I took the quotations at second hand, as I found them; and though I have spared no pains, I have not been able to find the original dissertation.

2. The *assertion* of the reviewer that I have misrepresented is not to be taken in evidence, according to the laws of controversy; and the passage which he has quoted contains no proof of the assertion. It is as follows: "In fact, there is no greater reason to complain of the lukewarmness of the generality of Unitarians, than there is of the generality of Christians of all denominations." But it is not "lukewarmness" which is the point in debate, but comparative purity and strictness of morality.

But, in relation to this point, Dr. Priestley certainly does say:

(1.) That those who hold to evangelical doctrines "have less apparent conformity to the world, and *seem* to have more of a real principle of religion."

(2.) That "Unitarian dissenters do not lay so much stress upon their principles as other Christians do upon theirs."

(3.) That "they are less concerned to inculcate their principles upon their children, their servants, and their dependents in general."

(4.) That great numbers, on becoming Unitarians, in the Church of England, and even among the clergy, did not feel the impropriety and absurdity of continuing to countenance a mode of worship which, according to their own principles, is idolatrous and blasphemous.

(5.) That "such persons also have no zeal for speculative

religion, no zeal for religion in general; and that their moral conduct, though decent, is not deemed strict and exemplary."

Has not Dr. Priestley made such declarations; and does his declaration, "that there is no more reason to *complain* of the lukewarmness of the generality of Unitarians than of the generality of Christians of all denominations," contradict or invalidate the above quotations? And what if Dr. Priestley had said one thing in one place, and something in opposition to it in another? The fault would not be mine, that he contradicted himself. Have I misrepresented the reviewer, by quoting what he has said in one place, and apparently contradicted in another? It would be perilous quoting Unitarian authors, if we must be convicted of misrepresenting them, because, somewhere, they may show that they have contradicted themselves.

3. Other passages from Dr. Priestley show that his opinions have not been misrepresented. He says, as quoted by Fuller, "The doctrines of a general and most particular providence are so leading a feature in every scheme of predestination, it brings God so near in everything, that an habitual and animated devotion is the result." One would think such a state of mind peculiarly favorable to strict morality.

Of Unitarianism, he says, "It cannot be denied that many of those who judge so truly concerning particular tenets of religion have attained to that cool, unbiased temper of mind, in consequence of being more indifferent to religion in general. Though, therefore, they are more favorably situated for distinguishing between truth and falsehood, they are not likely to acquire a *zeal* for what they suppose to be truth."

"Upon the whole, considering the great mixture of spiritual pride and bigotry in some of the most zealous Trinita-

rians, I think the moral character of Unitarians in general, allowing that there is among them greater apparent conformity to the world than is observable in others, approaches more nearly to the proper temper of Christianity. It is more cheerful, more benevolent, more candid. The former have somewhat less, and the latter, I hope, somewhat more, of a real principle of religion, than they seem to have."

We may now see why Dr. Priestley thinks there is no more reason *to complain* of lukewarmness in the Unitarians than in the Orthodox. It is because he *hopes* Unitarians have more of a principle of religion than they seem to have; and because he is confident that the Orthodox have somewhat less of a principle of religion than they seem to have. He admits, however, that Unitarian societies do not flourish; their members having but a slight attachment to them, and easily deserting them, though it is never to be imagined that they desert their principles.

4. It was not to prove Dr. Priestley's *opinion*, but to adduce his testimony as to *matters of fact*, that I gave the quotation; and the credibility of his testimony is not, I trust, to be annihilated by his ingeniously accounting for the facts to which he testifies, so that Calvinism shall receive no aid from them, and Unitarianism no detriment.

I now leave it to the reviewer to say whether I have been "guilty of an artifice and an unfairness," in quoting Dr. Priestley; and whether he has not lacked his usual moderation and charity, in bringing against me so serious a charge.

SERMON VIII.

RESOURCES OF THE ADVERSARY, AND MEANS OF THEIR DESTRUCTION.

"Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered." Isaiah 49 : 25.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death." Isaiah 53 : 12.

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." Luke 11 : 21, 22.

"And the seventh angel sounded ; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. 11 : 15.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Rev. 19 : 5, 6.

The Scriptures teach that sin commenced its reign on earth under the auspices of a mighty fallen spirit ; and that he, having seduced mankind from their allegiance to God, has been constantly employed to maintain his bad eminence over them. They also teach that the Son of God has interposed to destroy the works of this insurrectionary spirit ; and that

he will accomplish the object: that the power of Satan shall be broken; and the whole world be restored to loyalty and the favor of Heaven.

The passages which have just been recited allude to the success with which the enemy of God has fortified his cause; to its final overthrow; and to the exultation and joy with which the event will fill earth and heaven.

I am aware that, with some, the doctrine of fallen angels is but an eastern allegory; and the idea of a conflict between the creature and Creator ridiculous, and unworthy of the divine supremacy. I can only say, that, if there be not an order of sinful intelligences above men, the Bible is one of the most deceptive books ever written. The entire history of the world shows, that human depravity, though operating in accordance with the laws of mind, is yet methodized and wielded with a comprehension of plan wholly inexplicable upon the principle of accidental coincidence among men. That there should have been a system of well-constructed opposition to the Gospel, varying with circumstances, and comprehending the great amount of bad moral influence which has existed, without some presiding intellect, is as improbable, as that all the particles of matter which compose the universe should have fallen into their existing method and order by mere accident, and without the presiding intellect of the Deity. And, as to moral competition between the creature and the Creator, it exists, even if there be no fallen angels. It is a matter of fact before our eyes,—a matter of experience, too,— that the carnal mind is enmity against God; and that God, in Christ, is reconciling the world to himself.

It should be remembered, also, that, when God has formed moral beings, even he can govern them, as such, *only by moral influence*, in accordance with their accountability and the laws of mind; mere omnipotence being as irrelevant to

the government of mind, as moral influence would be to the government of the material universe. Nor must it be forgotten that an alienated world requires more moral power for its restoration than that of simple law, which proved insufficient to maintain its allegiance. It requires *a new moral influence*, so introduced and applied as to corroborate law, and strengthen the loyalty of all the good, while rebels are reconciled and pardoned.

The reconciliation, through Christ, of such a world as this, in opposition to the rooted aversion of every heart, the concentrated power of social wickedness, and the ceaseless counteraction of mighty intelligences, principalities and powers, does not seem to us an achievement unworthy of that Being who numbers the hairs of our heads. By prophets and apostles it is represented as exhibiting the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the wisdom, and goodness, and power, of God.

In this discourse, it is proposed to consider

THE DEFENCES AND RESOURCES OF THE ENEMY, AND THE MEANS OF THEIR OVERTHROW.

We shall suppose, as the language of the text does, that the Christianity which is to prevail on earth is the Christianity of the heart, rising to high eminence, and extending its blessed influence through all the relations of society, until the kingdoms of this world shall become associations of holiness, the Gospel become the predominant spring of action, and its morality the governing rule of all mankind. The array of opposition to such a glorious change on earth now demands our attention.

1. At the head of opposition to the Gospel, in numerical power, must be placed *Idolatry*. To banish from the earth all knowledge of God and his government, and substitute a

worship composed of lust and blood, seems most desirable to the great adversary, where circumstances allow it to be done: and this he has achieved in respect to about six hundred millions of the human family. In all that world of mind, knowledge is in deep eclipse, intellect slumbers, conscience is paralyzed, and all holy intercourse between earth and heaven is cut off; while passion and appetite, inflamed by sin, are suffered to prey uncontrolled.

2. The next form of opposition to the march of holiness is that of *Imposture*. This was introduced by Mahomet. It was a system accommodated to the condition of a mingled population, composed of pagans, Jews, and nominal Christians, all in a state of great ignorance and deep moral debasement. By complimenting Abraham and Moses, he beguiled the Jew; by conceding to the Saviour the rank of a prophet, he seduced the degenerate Christian; and by giving ample license to sensuality, in time and eternity, he secured the pagan: and what persuasion failed to accomplish, was finished by the sword. Thus, one hundred and forty millions have been grouped together under the most ferocious and horrid despotism that ever warred against Heaven, or tormented man. Over all these the smoke from the bottomless pit has ascended, intercepting the light of heaven, and dooming them for centuries to "darkness visible."

3. Cotemporaneously with this system of imposture, and like it a subject of prophecy, arose the *Papal superstition*, in the form of a corrupted Christianity, and adapted to a state of intellectual improvement where the grossness of Mahometan imposture might not be likely to prevail. This has been, and is still, the master-piece of that wisdom which is from beneath: concentrating the bad influence of all past systems; satisfactory to the pagan, and not alarming to the

degenerate Christian; inciting through the medium of sense; and giving such a license to sin, or such a cheap escape from its penalties, as allayed all fear, and stimulated to boundless indulgence.

Until this horrid system arose, the resistance made to the church of God had been planted without her walls. Now the sacred citadel is assailed and entered. Her friends are driven out, subjected to obloquy and death. The perverted authority of Heaven, and the sacred name of Christianity herself, and all the glorious and fearful sanctions of eternity, are arrayed against the pure Gospel. Instead of the fold of Christ, the church nominal became a ferocious beast, not sparing the flock: instead of a pure virgin, the mother of harlots, corrupting the nations. Instead of reflecting the light of the Sun of righteousness, every orb was eclipsed; every candlestick removed out of its place; while the night of ages settled down upon the earth. In this tremendous period, knowledge and virtue expired, and corruption and violence, as before the flood, filled the earth. The great merchandise was in the souls of men; the chief staples, indulgences to sin; and nothing but holiness of heart and life was absolutely unpardonable.

Here, around the standard of Christ, the kings of the earth took counsel against the Lord and his anointed, to break his bands and cast away his cords. And here the atheist and the Jew, the infidel and the libertine, could wear the sacred vestments, and make war upon the Saviour and his friends.

Popery is a system where science and ignorance, refinement and barbarism, wisdom and stupidity, taste and animalism, mistaken zeal and malignant enmity, may sanctimoniously pour out their virulence against the Gospel, and cry Hosanna, while they go forth to shed the blood and to wear

out the patience of the saints. And though by revolutions it has been shaken, and compelled by motives of policy to cease a little from blood, not a principle of this system has been abandoned. All the wiles of ages past are put in requisition now to heal the fatal wounds which the beast has received, and to render the system still more powerful and terrific. The leaven is in secret and in open operation in this country; and the quick action of the beast to the touch of the spear shows that he is neither dead nor asleep. And, considering the civilization, and wealth, and science, which the system comprehends, it is from popery, no doubt, that the Gospel is destined to experience the last and most determined resistance,— popery, as sustained by and sustaining despotic governments.

4. Another form of resistance to the Gospel is to be anticipated from the very nature of *despotic governments*,— so inconsistent in their influence with that illumination of mind and melioration of heart which it is predicted shall prevail, and which the blessed Gospel never fails to produce. Hence it may be expected that despots will take counsel against the Lord, as the march of intellect, and piety, and civil liberty, shall minister alarm.

To what extent forcible resistance will be made to the Gospel, it is not our object now to inquire; or whether republican forms of government will supplant the ancient dynasties. It is enough to know that all the governments who yield to the intimations of that Providence which sends out religion and civil liberty upon the earth will be safe and happy; and that all who make resistance will be agitated by revolutions, and destroyed by heavy judgments. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth: serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: kiss the Son,

lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

5. Another source of resistance to Christianity is that of *crime in its varied forms.* A vast amount of capital is embarked in enterprises which directly or indirectly war against morality. All this, when the spirit of Christianity shall prevail, will be contraband, and be withdrawn.* The power of steam shall not needlessly violate holy time, nor the sail, without cause, whiten in the Sabbath sun, and spread itself to pervert the breath of heaven. Theatres, those "schools of morality," falsely so called, shall cease to beguile unstable souls, whose feet go down to death, whose steps take hold on hell. Christianity, as she prevails, will form a public sentiment that will make virtue blush at the thought of meeting within the same walls, and breathing the same polluted air, and applauding the same exhibitions, with the most debased and wretched portion of the community. All who thrive and grow rich amid the desolations of inebriation, and all who desire to do wickedly without loss of character, or annoyance of conscience, will feel instinctively the approach of religion: and, as their craft shall be in danger, will raise a loud and bitter cry—"Great is Diana! Great is Diana!"

Nor are the maxims of more reputable trade in such nice accordance with the "golden rule" as to need no revision, or to present no resistance to the Gospel, as she moves on to make that rule the universal actual law of commercial intercourse: while the entire world of *honor* must be expected to stand against that Gospel which forbids murder, and inculcates forgiveness, and arrays public sentiment against the guilty.

* Maine has the honor to lead in one of the most difficult and important reformations.

If the Gospel would prohibit only acknowledged immoralities, and wink at human weaknesses, the whole pleasure-loving world would consent to an armistice, and permit her to move on without much complaint. But the inexorable requisitions of purity of heart and self-denial cannot fail to bring out against her a multitudinous and determined resistance. The haters of her uncharitableness, and the lovers of a more liberal way, and all classes of the openly wicked, will, it may be expected, as the light increases and enmity rises, be condensed into a firmer and firmer phalanx of opposition. And now will the alarm be sounded about popery and priestcraft, by just that class of men who, in papal countries, love darkness, and most cheerfully purchase indulgences to sin; and who, in this country, should the darkness of popery be permitted to come upon us, would be the first to hail it as a covert for their crimes, and a quietus for their consciences. And yet, panic-struck will many become about liberty of conscience, who long since have ceased to have any conscience; and suddenly will many fall in love with civil liberty who, all their days, and with all their might, have, by their pernicious influence, been employed in attempts to undermine her deep foundations.

6. To cover the nakedness of this forlorn hope of opposition to the Gospel, *a more liberal sort of religion* must be introduced, which shall keep men in countenance, and enable them to wield the name and institutions of Christianity against Christianity,—including so much truth as may serve to beguile, but so little as cannot avail to save,—sustained by such as live in pleasure, and will not bow the knee to Christ. The time will have come when the light of science and of Christianity will have rendered obsolete the grossness of idolatry, the imposture of Mahomet, the superstitions of popery,

and the impurity of infidelity. A religion must rise, therefore, under the last touchings and finishings of art, where infidels may be received without conversion; and where they may be converted with scarce a perceptible change in doctrine, heart, or life; and where, as in papal countries, the thoughtless, and the gay, and the beautiful, and the dissipated, may float together down the stream, to the sounds of music, and drink the lethean cup, and wake not till their redemption has ceased forever. All this abomination of desolation is predicted, as attending the last triumphs of pure Christianity. "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

7. One other source of opposition to the progress of vital Christianity remains to be mentioned. There may be an attempt to wield the church against herself, by *corrupting the purity of revivals of religion.* Terrible, by the power of revivals, as an army with banners, her victory is secure, unless fanaticism can be substituted for pure religion, and her compact masses be broken and scattered by the commotion of unhallowed passions within. In this manner was the glory of the Reformation eclipsed, and vital religion, in the time of Cromwell, made a scoff and a by-word. The same attempt was made in New England early in the days of our fathers. It was repeated in the time of Whitefield and the immortal Edwards, with lamentable, though with but partial success. As revivals shall become more extensive, and the Spirit of God shall awaken larger portions of the community at once, opportunity will be afforded to the enemy — and, apprized of his devices, we ought not to think that the opportunity will

be neglected — of mingling false fire with holy zeal, for the purpose of throwing discredit upon a work which threatens a speedy overthrow of his empire.

All these great divisions of systematic opposition to the Gospel have, where circumstances allowed, been defended by the sword. Christianity, in her first attempts to disenthrall the world, met the storms of ten persecutions, protracted through a period of three hundred years.

The false prophet established, and still maintains, his empire by force. It is death to turn from Mahomet to Jesus Christ. And as to popery, in her dominions, all the wiles and corruptions of idolatry and imposture have been condensed, and wielded with infernal wisdom and malignity against the Gospel, ever since the apocalyptic kings gave their power to the beast. And when atheism, for a little moment, abolished popery, its terrific power was, at the same moment, directed with indiscriminate fury against Christianity. The Bible was burnt, the Sabbath blotted out, the existence of God denied, and death proclaimed an eternal sleep.

The Arian heresy, protected by the sword, wielded against the truth a furious persecution. In Holland, Arminius attempted to enlist both literature and the civil arm for the propagation of his sentiments, and to some extent succeeded. At Geneva, the enemies of evangelical sentiment, as appears from recent events, do not rely on charity, and enlightened reason, and liberty of conscience, but upon the civil power, to protect them in their usurpations, and to keep back the truth.

And now, can such varied and mighty resistance be overcome? Can the earth be enlightened? Can the nations be disenthralled? Can the whole creation, which has groaned

and travailed together in pain until now, be brought out of bondage into glorious liberty? Yes: all this can be done, and *will* be done. Our next inquiry, then, is,

BY WHAT MEANS SHALL EVENTS SO DESIRABLE BE ACCOMPLISHED?

First — By the judgments of Heaven, in which the Son of Man will come upon the strong man armed, and take away his armor.

Secondly — By the universal propagation of the Gospel; before the light of which, idolatry, imposture, and superstition, will retreat abashed. And,

Thirdly — By frequent, and, at last, general revivals of religion; giving resistless power to the Gospel, as it is preached to every creature.

Then will come to pass that which is written. Great voices will be heard in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ:* as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, saying, *Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

It is manifest from prophecy, and clearly to be anticipated from the existing state of the world, that *great commotions and distress of nations* will exist, antecedently to the spiritual universal reign of Christ on the earth. Some have supposed that these calamities will fall alike upon the church and the world; that as yet the witnesses are to be slain; and that, for three years, at least, Christianity will seem to be blotted from the earth. Whereas, manifestly, the judgments which are to precede the glory of the latter day are to fall almost exclusively upon antichristian nations. And if the witnesses are yet to be slain, they are to be slain in the street of that great city which, spiritually, is called "Sodom and Egypt,"

— prophetic symbols, which have been understood to designate countries subject to the dominion of antichrist. The very struggle to suppress vital Christianity in papal countries, called the slaying of the witnesses, may be, and probably will be, the result of moral causes now in powerful operation. Science, and commerce, and the progress of evangelical religion, are fast apprizing mankind of their rights, and awakening the desire of civil and religious liberty. And this slaying of the witnesses may be the last struggle of those despotisms, to arrest the march of truth and freedom. It may be the collision between light and darkness,— between despotism and liberty,— which shall call out the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty; when he, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, on whose head are many crowns, and whose vesture is dipped in blood, shall smite the nations with the sword that goeth out of his mouth, and rule them with a rod of iron, and tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; when the angel standing in the sun shall summon the fowls of the heavens to the supper of the great God,—to eat the flesh of kings, and of captains, and of mighty men.*

But, without attempting a minute exposition of prophecy, nothing is more plainly revealed than the visitation of the earth with unparalleled judgments and revolutions, preparatory to that state of light and peace which is to bless the world. So long as Satan can wield the power of despotic governments against the truth, he can hold his goods in peace. But these defences a stronger than he will take away, when, in awful judgments, He shall come upon him. *He shall overturn, and overturn, until He, whose right it*

*Rev. 19 : 17, 18.

is, shall reign. The day of vengeance is in his heart, because the year of his redeemed is come. The foundations of the earth do shake; the earth is utterly broken down; the earth is clean dissolved; the earth is moved exceedingly; the earth shall reel to and fro; and the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth; and they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit; and shall be shut up in the prison. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun shall be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great.

One of these moral earthquakes has already shaken Europe to its centre; and the thunderings and heavings of the unquiet earth proclaim that one woe is past, and, behold, another woe cometh quickly.

When these systems of physical resistance are destroyed, then will the time have come to extend the institutions of the Gospel throughout the world. Benevolence, like the air, will move to fill up the vacuum. Like the light from its great fountain, it will fly to cheer the nations who sit in darkness. And having no resistance to encounter but the simple power of error, the conflict will be but momentary, and the victory complete. This also is in accordance with prophecy: for immediately after the downfall of Babylon is announced, all heaven breaks forth in ecstasy, saying, *Let us rejoice and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come,*

and his wife hath made herself ready. The church of Christ is called his bride; and the conversion of the nations to Christianity and to God, the day of her espousals.

That this glorious victory is to be consummated by *the special influence of the Holy Spirit*, is equally manifest. The simple presence of Christianity would no more convert the heathen than it converts those where it already exists. Were every family on earth now blessed with a Bible and a pastor, these, without the effusions of the Spirit, would not maintain upon the earth an uncorrupt nominal Christianity, for one hundred years. Revivals of religion are alone adequate to the moral reformation of the world. All other means — science, legislation, philosophy, eloquence, and argument — have been relied on in vain. The disease is of the heart, and they reach it not. But revivals touch the deep springs of human action, and give tone and energy to the moral government of God. They multiply families that call upon the name of the Lord and train up children in his fear, and churches constrained by the love of Christ to propagate the Gospel. They elevate the standard of charity, and augment the capital which is consecrated to the renovation of the world, and the importunity of prayer which secures its application and efficacy. They multiply the host of evangelical ministers and missionaries. They repress crime, and purify the public morality, and breathe into legislation and the intercourse of nations that spirit of the Gospel which shall banish wars, and introduce peace upon earth and good-will towards men. They pour daylight upon darkness, and destroy, with a touch, the power of sophistry. Hence, nothing is so terrible to the enemies of evangelical truth as revivals of religion, because nothing is so irresistible. If they oppose them by violence, they move on. If they misrepresent them,

they move on. If they ridicule them, they move on. If they imitate them, the imitation fails, and they move on. While, often, the chosen vessels of opposition fall under their power, sending panic and rage through the ranks of the enemy. It is owing to this power of revivals that they are everywhere by the wicked so much spoken against, and all the infirmities of humanity which attend them gathered up with such exultation, and urged as confirmation strong that they are the work of man, and not the work of God. It is reserved, therefore, for revivals of religion to follow in the train of the means of grace with increasing frequency and power, until a nation shall be born in a day. This, also, is predicted. *Who art thou, O mountain, before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain. Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*

The judgments which are to shake down anti-christian empires, and cast down high imaginations, and lay open the world to the entrance of truth and the power of the Spirit, are to be closely associated with a new and unparalleled *vigor of Christian enterprise.* Until now, the church will have been the assailed party, and stood upon the defensive; but, henceforth, the word of command will not be, *Stand,* but MARCH. The gates of the holy city will be thrown open; the tide of war will be rolled upon the enemy; and

one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.

The means and efforts for evangelizing the world must correspond, however, with the magnitude of the result. The idea that God will convert the heathen in his own good time, and that Christians have nothing to do but to pray and devoutly wait, is found in no canonical book. It is the maxim of covetousness, and sloth, and uncaring infidelity. We have no authority for saying, what some, without due consideration, have said, that God, if he pleased, could doubtless in a moment convert the whole heathen world without the Gospel. It might as well be said that he can, if he please, burn without fire, or drown without water, or give breath without atmosphere, as that he can instruct intellectual beings without the means of knowledge, and influence moral beings without law and motive, and thus reclaim an alienated world without the knowledge and moral power of the Gospel. It is no derogation from the power of God, that, to produce results, it must be exerted by means adapted to the constitution of things which himself has established. God has no set time to favor the husbandman, but when he is diligent in business; and no set time to favor Zion, but when her servants favor her stones, and take pleasure in the dust thereof. From the beginning, the cause of God on earth has been maintained and carried forward only by the most heroic exertion. Christianity, even in the age of miracles, was not propagated but by stupendous efforts. And it is only by a revival of primitive zeal and enterprise that the glorious things spoken of the city of our God can be accomplished.

Nor need we be disheartened. We possess a thousand-fold the advantage of apostles and primitive Christians, for the spread of the Gospel. And shall the whole church on earth

— shall the thousand thousands who now profess the pure religion — be dismayed and paralyzed at an enterprise which had once been well-nigh accomplished by the energies of twelve men?

But what can be done? It would require ten discourses to answer this question in detail. We can only sketch the outlines of that moral array by which Jesus Christ is preparing to come upon the strong man, and overcome him, and take from him all his armor.

1. There must be *more faith* in the church of God.

All the uncertainties and waverings of unbelief must be swept away by the power of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Those "scenes surpassing fable," when Satan shall be bound, and an emancipated world shall sing hosanna to the Son of David, must rise up before us in all the freshness and inspiration of a glorious reality. Such faith, and only such, will achieve again the wonders it wrought in other days. It has lost none of its power. Again it will subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness become strong, wax valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens. For this is the victory over the world, even your *faith*.

2. There must be *a more intense love for Christ* in his church.

Such love as now burns dimly in the hearts of Christians — a low, and languid, and wavering affection, halting between the opposing attractions of earth and heaven — may answer for standing upon the *defensive*, but never for making that *vigorous onset* which shall subdue the world to Christ. Effort will never surpass desire. And as yet our hearts are not

equal to those efforts needed for the achievement of victory. They linger and look back upon the world. They hesitate, and slowly, and with a sigh, part with substance in penurious measure. Weight hangs as yet on the wheels of the Victor's chariot · and never, on earth, as in heaven, will it move,

> "Flashing thick flames, ...
> . . . . . instinct with spirit,"

but when

> "Attended by ten thousand thousand saints."

3. There must come an era of *more decided action*, before the earth can be subdued to Christ.

Compared with the exigency, we have not, as yet, the semblance of an army in the field; and our munitions are yet to be collected. Two hundred souls constitute the entire force which twelve millions of freemen, cheered and blessed with the light of the Gospel, have sent forth to bring the world out of bondage. And yet, one-half the nation is panic-struck at the drafts thus made upon her resources! What has been done, however, is but mere skirmishing before the shock of battle. Half the subjects of Satan's dark empire on earth have not heard, as yet, that we have a being. And were none but such feeble efforts to be put forth, he, instead of coming down in great wrath, would keep his temper, and leave the war to his subalterns.

Nothing great on earth, good or bad, was ever accomplished without decisive action. The cause, in the moral world, as really as in the natural, must ever be proportioned to the effect to be produced. And what have we done, as yet, to justify the expectation that God, by such means, is about to *make all things new?* Could our independence have been achieved by such indecisive actions as we put forth for the

emancipation of the world? Dear brethren, we must fix our eye earnestly on a world lying in wickedness; our hearts must be fully set upon its deliverance; our hands must be opened wide for its relief. Not only the ministers of religion must give themselves wholly to this work, but all who prize civil and religious freedom, all who exult in these blessings, must come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. And when, to all who are now cheered by the light of revelation, the deliverance of a world in bondage shall become the all-absorbing object, and the concentrating point of holy enterprise, then speedily will the angel descend from heaven with a great chain, to bind and cast into the bottomless pit him who through so many ages has deceived the nations. But,

4. For this glorious achievement, there is demanded *more courage* than has, in modern days, been manifested by the church of God.

Wherever circumstances have precluded the application of force for the defence of his cause, there the god of this world has attempted to fortify it by a *perverted public sentiment.* This, while it predominates, is as terrific as the inquisition; and, if not as bloody, it is unquestionably as virulent, overbearing, and severe. Multitudes shrink before it who would not hesitate to storm the deadly breach; and one-half the power of the Christian church is, doubtless, this very moment, paralyzed by it, if not even arrayed by its influence against the cause of Christ. Fashion is the Juggernaut of Christian lands, around whose car pilgrims of all conditions gather, and do homage.

Here, then, in communities civilized and nominally Christian, is to be fought one of the keenest battles; for, after every strong-hold is demolished, if Satan can but frame the laws of honor and of fashion, he will not fail to govern by maxims

which will shut out the Gospel, and perpetuate the dominion of sin. And Christians are the first to be emancipated. While they are in captivity, the world will be in chains. Jesus Christ must have entire possession of his own soldiers, before the armies of the living God can put to flight the armies of the aliens.

This conflict for dominion over public sentiment is coming on, and by this generation, in city and in country, it is to be decided whether an evangelical or a worldly influence shall prevail; whether the landmarks of Christian morality shall stand against the inundations of vice, or, with everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report, be swept away. Emboldened by the pusillanimity of the friends of virtue, the enemy have become audacious, and scarcely covet the veil of darkness, but seem even to glory in their shame. And if no stand is made, we are undone. The church in this land will go into captivity, and the nation is undone. Our prosperity and voluptuousness will be our ruin; and short and rapid will be our journey from the cradle to the grave. But if resistance is made, then will the waves rise, and foam, and roar, and dash furiously upon those who shall dare to make a stand; and birds of ill omen will flap their sooty wings, and croak, and scream, to intimidate and dishearten the fearful and the unbelieving; and all the engines of bad influence will be applied to prevent that coalition of patriotism and of virtue which would set bounds to the encroachments of evil, and shed daylight upon the works of darkness, and stamp with indelible and intolerable infamy wickedness in high places and in low places.

And now, *custom*, with silver tongue, will plead *prescription*,— "It always has been so, and always will be, and why should we attempt innovation?" And *interest*, too will plead

necessity,—"How can I withdraw my capital, or alter my course? To refuse to do wrong a little would be to take away my children's bread." And now, *difficulty*, with good wishes and sorrowing face, will plead, "Spare thy servant in this thing,—is it not a little one?" While *fear* will see the giants, the sons of Anak, and call out for care, and prudence, lest we should act prematurely, or be righteous overmuch. *Petulance*, too, will lift up her voice, with vexation at our presumptuous meddling, wondering that we cannot mind our own affairs, and let other people alone. And even *charity*, so called, will draw aside her veil, for the archers with poisoned arrows to hit us. While *liberality*, provoked beyond endurance, will hail upon our heads the hard names of "bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, hypocrite."

All this, however, we could easily sustain, were there no treachery within. But our hearts are yet in too close consultation with flesh and blood. "What will the world think? What will the world say? How will it affect my reputation, my interest, my ambition, or even my usefulness? Suppose I step in as a kind of candid mediator between the world and my too zealous brethren, taking the prudent course, and not carrying matters too far?" Oh, that prudent course,—that middle ground,—so crowded, when the lines are drawing between Christ and the world! Satan desires no better troops than neutral Christians. And the Lord Jesus Christ abhors none more. He prefers infidelity to lukewarm Christianity. "I would that thou wert either cold or hot; so, then, because thou art neither, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

As to cheating Satan out of his empire over men, by a reserved course of warfare, he has no objection that Christians should dream about it, and try it. But we mistake, if

we suppose our wisdom a match for his wiles, or that we can so prudently drive him out of this world as that he will find no pretext for controversy. Whenever we do enough to give to religion a solemn reality upon the minds of men, and draw the cords of evangelical morality with such power as shall compel reformation or inflict disgrace, we must calculate to meet his resistance who reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience. And the time will come when men must take sides. For, as the conflict between virtue and vice waxes warm, neither side will tolerate neutrality: and he who plants his foot upon neutral ground will select just the hottest place in the battle, and receive the fire from both sides.

Two things are required of all who would be found on the side of liberty and evangelical morality. One is, that we will not do wrong in obedience to custom: the other is, that we will not be accessary to the wrong done by others,— that we will give to the cause of virtue the testimony of correct opinions, the power of a correct example, and the influence of our inflexible patronage. There are piety and principle enough in the community to put down the usurpations of irreligion and crime, if the sound part of the community will only awake, and array itself on the side of purity and order. But we must come out, and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing. The entire capital in the hands of honest and moral men, which is employed in establishments that corrupt society, must be withdrawn; and that patronage which has swelled the revenue of establishments that lend their aid to the cause of licentiousness must be turned over to the side of purity and order. Until this is done, we shall not cease to be partakers in other men's sins. The press, that mighty engine of good or evil in a free country, must be enlisted decisively on the side of virtue; and its perverted

influence, if it continue, must be sustained only by those whose guilty cause it espouses. We cannot, as Christians,— we cannot, as patriots,— give our patronage to that press which will not plead the cause of virtue, and which will prostitute its fearful energies to the cause of sin.

5. There must be new and more vigorous efforts to increase the number and power of evangelical churches in our land.

In all countries, the tone of piety and evangelical morality corresponds exactly with the number, and purity, and energy of the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The want of this organized moral power in many parts of our land is appalling. Our population multiplies, and the ratio of good moral influence declines, and ignorance and crime are coming in like a flood. All that has been done by Tract Societies, by Sabbath-schools, by Education Societies, and by the National Society for Domestic Missions, is as the drop of the bucket to the ocean. A new and mighty effort is demanded to send light through the territories of darkness, to repress crime, and perpetuate our civil and religious institutions. In our large cities, especially, is the increase of ignorance and licentiousness lamentable and ominous. Here, wealth and temptation concentrate their power upon masses of mind whose influence cannot fail to affect deeply the destiny of the nation. If they send out a vigorous current of healthful life-blood, the whole nation will feel the renovating influence: but if, with every pulsation, they send out iniquity and death, no power on earth can avert our doom.

A *moral* power is the only influence that can save our cities. Mere coercion, in a land of freemen, will not avail. Nor will a lax nominal Christianity suffice, where offenders may find access to the table of Christ, and protection by the horns of the altar. The new churches, to succeed, should

be composed of persons of real piety, of kindred sentiment, and of decided character; and, from the beginning, consist of so many members, and be blessed with such talent and devoted piety in the ministry, and be so countenanced and sustained by other churches, as that their attraction shall not fail to bring under the sacred influence of the Gospel the surrounding community. Until our cities shall thus be made to feel, in every part, the purifying power of the Gospel, the whole land will continue to send to them, as it has done, hecatombs of youthful victims, to be repaid by disappointed hopes and moral contamination.

6. Special effort is required, to secure to the rising generation an education free from the influence of bad example, and more decidedly evangelical.

The atmosphere which our children breathe, from the cradle upward, should be pure. Instead of this, it would not be difficult to find common schools in which ignorance and irreligion predominate. Even where the intellect is cultivated, the heart not unfrequently is corrupted, and the child made wise only to do evil. In a great proportion of the higher schools, to which Christians send their children, little exists of a decidedly religious tendency; while, in some, a powerful influence is exerted against evangelical sentiments and piety.

And though in many of our colleges there is a salutary religious influence, and repeated revivals of religion are enjoyed, in none is the influence of religion so decisive as it might be; while in some, to which pious parents send their children, the influence is directly and powerfully hostile to religion.

I am aware that not a few regard religious influence in our colleges as already too great, and that an effort is making

to separate religion from science, during the progress of a collegiate education. And those who choose to rear colleges, and send their offspring, where the power of the Gospel shall be excluded, have, doubtless, a right to do so,— answerable for their conduct only to God. But no Christian can do this without violating the vows of God which are upon him, to train up his child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And, instead of a compromise in the evangelical colleges of our land, there should be, as easily there may be, a more decided tone of religious influence. Our colleges should, every one of them, be blessed, not only with preaching, but with kind, discreet, and assiduous pastoral instruction and care. Why should these precious communities of inexperienced youth, separated from parental inspection, and exposed to peculiar temptation, be deprived of the watchful eye and parental voice of pastoral exhortation and advice? What parent would not pray with more faith, and sleep more quietly, if he knew that some one, acquainted with the youthful heart, and appointed to watch over his child, had gained his confidence and affection, and was praying and laboring for his salvation?

There is no period in life when the heart may be more successfully assailed than that which is passed in a college. And there is no class of human beings, among whom revivals may be promoted, by proper pastoral attention, with greater certainty, or with greater power and glory. Nor can it be expected that the church will ever look forth fair as the morning, until effectual care is taken that, in her higher schools and colleges, her children shall be induced to consecrate to God the dew of their youth.

7. The vigor of *charitable effort* must be greatly increased. As long as rich men shall trust more in uncertain riches

than in the living God, and the covetous shall dare to heap up treasures to themselves, consecrating to God scarcely the crumbs that fall from their table, and the ambitious shall insist that they will roll in splendor, and give only the pittance which can be spared from the expense of a wanton ostentation,— as long as professors of religion shall consume, in extra gratifications of sense, to the injury of health, sums that, if consecrated to Christ, might suffice to extend the word of life and the institutions of the Gospel all over the world,— as long as avaricious Christians shall so extend their plans of business, with the increase of their capital, as always to be straitened in the midst of their gains,— and as long as parents shall labor to amass wealth for their offspring, only to paralyze their enterprise, and corrupt their morals, and insure their ruin,— so long the cause of God on earth must move slowly. But the blame must rest on us. There is, at this moment, in the hands of Christians capital enough to evangelize the world in a short period of time, and without the retrenchment of a single comfort, and only by the consecration to Christ of substance the possession of which would be useless, and often injurious. It is not required of Christian nations to sustain the entire work of preaching the Gospel to all the unevangelized population of the earth. Nothing is needed but to erect the standard in pagan lands, —to plant the seed,— to deposit the leaven in schools and in churches, until each nation shall support the institutions of the Gospel. This is the work to which God, in his providence, is calling the churches. Now, and for fifty years to come, the substance and enterprise of good men are imperiously demanded. Within that period, it is not improbable that every nation may be so far evangelized as that the work

may move onward to its consummation without extraneous aid.

8. The jealousies of Christians, who are united, substantially, in their views of evangelical doctrine and religion, and who are divided only by localities, and rites, and forms, must yield, and give place to the glorious exigencies of the present day. The amalgamation of denominations is not required. The division of labor may greatly augment the amount; and the provocation to love and good works may be real and salutary, and still be conducted without invidious collision. Like the tribes of Israel, we may all encamp about the tabernacle of God,— each under his own standard,—and when the ark advances, may all move onward, terrible only to the powers of darkness. And if the enemies of righteousness are not sufficient to rebuke our selfishness, and force us into a coalition of love and good works, then verily it may be expected, —and even be hoped,— that God, by the fire of persecution, will purge away our dross, and take away our tin, until we shall love him, and his cause, and one another, with a pure heart, fervently.

9. Let me add, that we must guard against the dangers peculiar to a state of religious prosperity.

There is no condition in which an individual, or the church at large, can be exempted from temptations. And especially as the church shall become formidable, and bring upon the great enemy of God the pressure of a desperate extremity, we are to expect that his rage will increase, and his wiles be multiplied. For he will leave the world only when forced; and will fight upon the retreat,— giving many a desperate battle, when it shall seem as if the necessity was past of watching against his devices. Never, therefore, has the necessity of vigilance and prayer been more imperious than

now. Let all the churches, then, with their pastors, feel deeply their dependence on God; and when their alms come up before him, and his Spirit shall descend in new and glorious showers, let them watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation, nor experience an overthrow in the moment of victory.

To fear revivals, because attended by some indications of human imperfection, would be weak and wicked: but, far from the church of God be the presumptuous confidence, that nothing deeply injurious to the general interests of religion can be blended with a real work of the Spirit. But, though I am not without solicitude on this head, I do trust and expect that God will preserve his churches, and cause pure religion and undefiled to prosper, and not permit the adversary to turn our glory into shame. Oh, could he do it, how would his minions scream out their joy! and how would Zion be confounded, and, in this day of rejoicing, be compelled to hang her harp upon the willows, and sit down to weep in sackcloth and ashes!

To conclude,—Will any of you, my hearers, in this glorious day, take side against the cause of Christ? It will be a fearful experiment. What the mind and counsel of God have purposed to do for the melioration of man is now hastening to its consummation, with the intenseness of infinite benevolence, under the guidance of unerring wisdom, and by the impulse of Almighty Power. And woe unto him who contendeth with his Maker! The lines are now drawing, and preparation is fast making for the battle of the great day of God Almighty. And who is on the Lord's side? Who! Will any of you, in this sublimely interesting moment, stand on neutral ground? Remember that neutrality is treason: and, if persisted in, is as fatal as the unpardonable sin. Jesus

Christ will have the decided services of his people. Already has he denounced as enemies all who will not labor and suffer for him. *He that is not for me, is against me: and whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I came to send peace on earth* (that is, that the progress of truth will be without resistance and persecution); *I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come* (that is, the effect of my coming will be, as the Gospel prevails) *to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.* These statutes are not repealed. And if the laws of Christian discipleship could bind men to give up every relative, and even life itself, for Christ and his Gospel, no excuse, surely, will screen from condemnation those who flinch and temporize, where the sacrifices required are comparatively trivial. If such as would not lay down their life for Christ cannot be accepted, what will become of those, in Christian lands, who will not lay down their substance, nor risk their reputation, nor lift a finger, to advance his cause?

Is there a Christian here who cannot, for the year to come, double the amount of his charities? Is there one who will not now purpose in his heart to do it? Brethren, the time is short in which we here have opportunity to express our boundless obligations to the Saviour. The fashion of the world passeth away. Next year, our tongue may be employed in celestial praises, and our substance be in other

hands. What remains, then, but that, this day, we dedicate ourselves and our all, anew, to Him who washed us in his blood? The tone of feeling which we cherish to-day may, by a holy sympathy, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, be propagated through this great city, through this powerful nation, and through the world. The augmented religious enterprise to which we pledge ourselves this day may tell quickly in the very heart of Satan's empire, and cause light to spring up in retreats of deepest darkness.

If any man, however, is smitten with fear, let him retreat. If any man is faint-hearted, let him draw back. If any man tremble at his proportion of the charges for evangelizing the whole world, let him depart. If any man is alarmed at the noise which precedes the last conflict, let him hide himself, with his talent, in the earth! But let all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and wait for his appearing and glory, give themselves anew to his service, and break the earthen vessel, and lift up their light, and shout, *The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!* and the victory, and more than the victory, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High God. And a great voice out of heaven shall be heard, saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men; and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

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